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THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

ROBERT BROWNING

M.A.

HONORARY FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD

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A SOUL'S TRAGEDY—LURIA
CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY
MEN AND WOMEN

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A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

ACT FIRST,

BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE POETRY OF CHIAPPINO'S LIFE :

AND ACT SECOND, ITS PROSE.

London, 1846

PERSONS.

LUITOLFO and EULALIA, betrothed lovers.

CHIAPPINO, their friend.

OGNIBEN, the Pope's Legate.

Citizens of Faenza.

TIME, 15—. Place, FAENZA.

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

Inside LUITOLFO'S house. CHIAPPINO, EULALIA.

Eu. What is it keeps Luitolfo? Night 's fast falling,
And 't was scarce sunset . . . had the ave-bell
Sounded before he sought the Provost's house?
I think not: all he had to say would take
Few minutes, such a very few, to say!
How do you think, Chiappino? If our lord
The Provost were less friendly to your friend
Than everybody here professes him,
I should begin to tremble—should not you?
Why are you silent when so many times
I turn and speak to you?

Ch. That 's good!

Eu. You laugh:

Ch. Yes. I had fancied nothing that bears price
In the whole world was left to call my own;
And, may be, felt a little pride thereat.
Up to a single man's or woman's love,
Down to the right in my own flesh and blood,
There 's nothing mine, I fancied,—till you spoke:

—Counting, you see, as “nothing” the permission
To study this peculiar lot of mine
In silence : well, go silence with the rest

Of the world's good ! What can I say, shall serve ?

Eu. This,—lest you, even more than needs, embitter
Our parting : say your wrongs have cast, for once,
A cloud across your spirit !

Ch. How a cloud ?

Eu. No man nor woman loves you, did you say ?

Ch. My God, were 't not for thee !

Eu. Ay, God remains
Even did men forsake you

Ch. Oh, not so !

Were 't not for God, I mean, what hope of truth—
Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay with man ?

I, now—the homeless friendless penniless
Proscribed and exiled wretch who speak to you,—
Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for my death,
(The thing that tempts me most) help speaking lies
About your friendship and Luitolfo's courage

And all our townsfolk's equanimity—
Through sheer incompetence to rid myself
Of the old miserable lying trick
Caught from the liars I have lived with,—God,
Did I not turn to thee ! It is thy prompting
I dare to be ashamed of, and thy counsel
Would die along my coward lip, I know.

But I do turn to thee. This craven tongue,
These features which refuse the soul its way,

Reclaim thou ! Give me truth—truth, power to speak
 —And after be sole present to approve
 The spoken truth ! Or, stay, that spoken truth,
 Who knows but you, too, may approve ?

Eu.

Ah, well—

Keep silence then, Chiappino !

Ch.

You would hear,

You shall now,—why the thing we please to style
 My gratitude to you and all your friends
 For service done me, is just gratitude
 So much as yours was service—and no more.
 I was born here, so was Luitolfo ; both
 At one time, much with the same circumstance
 Of rank and wealth ; and both, up to this night
 Of parting company, have side by side
 Still fared, he in the sunshine—I, the shadow.
 “ Why ? ” asks the world. “ Because,” replies the world
 To its complacent self, “ these playfellows,
 “ Who took at church the holy-water drop
 “ Each from the other’s finger, and so forth,—
 “ Were of two moods : Luitolfo was the proper
 “ Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,
 “ Fit for the sunshine, so, it followed him.
 “ A happy-tempered bringer of the best
 “ Out of the worst ; who bears with what ’s past cure,
 “ And puts so good a face on ’t—wisely passive
 “ Where action ’s fruitless, while he remedies
 “ In silence what the foolish rail against ;
 “ A man to smooth such natures as parade

" Of opposition must exasperate ;
 " No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak
 " Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous
 " At lucky junctures ; one who won't forego
 " The after-battle work of binding wounds,
 " Because, forsooth he 'd have to bring himself
 " To side with wound-inflictors for their leave ! "
 —Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat
 What comes so glibly from the common mouth,
 About Luitolfo and his so-styled friend ?

Eu. Because, that friend's sense is obscured . . .

Ch.

I thought

You would be readier with the other half
 Of the world's story, my half ! Yet, 't is true.
 For all the world does say it. Say your worst !
 True, I thank God, I ever said " you sin,"
 When a man did sin : if I could not say it,
 I glared it at him ; if I could not glare it,
 I prayed against him ; then my part seemed over.
 God's may begin yet : so it will, I trust.

Eu. If the world outraged you, did we ?

Ch.

What 's " me "

That you use well or ill ? It 's man, in me,
 All your successes are an outrage to,
 You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say !
 Here 's our Faenza birthplace ; they send here
 A provost from Ravenna : how he rules,
 You can at times be eloquent about.
 " Then, end his rule ! "—" Ah yes, one stroke does that !

" But patience under wrong works slow and sure.
 " Must violence still bring peace forth? He, beside,
 " Returns so blandly one's obeisance! ah—
 " Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,
 " Some human sympathy which, once excite,
 " And all the lump were leavened quietly :
 " So, no more talk of striking, for this time ! "

But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear
 These pretty takings-up and layings-down
 Our cause, just as you think occasion suits.
 Enough of earnest, is there? You 'll play, will you?
 Diversify your tactics, give submission,
 Obsequiousness and flattery a turn,
 While we die in our misery patient deaths?
 We all are outraged then, and I the first :
 I, for mankind, resent each shrug and smirk,
 Each beck and bend, each . . all you do and are,
 I hate !

Eu. We share a common censure, then.
 'T is well you have not poor Luitolfo's part
 Nor mine to point out in the wide offence.

Ch. Oh, shall I let you so escape me, lady?
 Come, on your own ground, lady,—from yourself,
 (Leaving the people's wrong, which most is mine)
 What have I got to be so grateful for?
 These three last fines, no doubt, one on the other
 Paid by Luitolfo?

Eu. Shame, Chiappino !

Ch. Shame

Fall presently on who deserves it most !
 —Which is to see. He paid my fines—my friend,
 Your prosperous smooth lover presently,
 Then, scarce your wooer,—soon, your husband : well—
 I loved you.

Eu. Hold !

Ch. You knew it, years ago.
 When my voice faltered and my eye grew dim
 Because you gave me your silk mask to hold—
 My voice that greatens when there 's need to curse
 The people's Provost to their heart's content,
 —My eye, the Provost, who bears all men's eyes,
 Banishes now because he cannot bear,—
 You knew . . but you do your parts—my part, I :
 So be it ! You flourish, I decay : all 's well.

Eu. I hear this for the first time.

Ch. The fault 's there ?
 Then my days spoke not, and my nights of fire
 Were voiceless ? Then the very heart may burst
 Yet all prove nought, because no mincing speech
 Tells leisurely that thus it is and thus ?
 Eulalia, truce with toying for this once !
 A banished fool, who troubles you to-night
 For the last time—why, what 's to fear from me ?
 You knew I loved you !

Eu. Not so, on my faith !
 You were my now-affianced lover's friend—
 Came in, went out with him, could speak as he.
 All praise your ready parts and pregnant wit ,

See how your words come from you in a crowd !
 Luitolfo's first to place you o'er himself
 In all that challenges respect and love :
 Yet you were silent then, who blame me now.
 I say all this by fascination, sure :
 I am all but wed to one I love, yet listen !
 It must be, you are wronged, and that the wrongs
 Luitolfo pities. . .

Ch. —You too pity ? Do !

But hear first what my wrongs are ; so began
 This talk and so shall end this talk. I say,
 Was 't not enough that I must strive (I saw)
 To grow so far familiar with your charms
 As next contrive some way to win them—which
 To do, an age seemed far too little—for, see !
 We all aspire to heaven ; and there is heaven
 Above us : go there ! Dare we go ? no, surely !
 How dare we go without a reverent pause,
 A growing less unfit for heaven ? Even so,
 I dared not speak : the greater fool, it seems !
 Was 't not enough to struggle with such folly,
 But I must have, beside, the very man
 Whose slight free loose and incapacious soul
 Gave his tongue scope to say whate'er he would)
 —Must have him load me with his benefits
 For fortune's fiercest stroke ?

Eu.

Justice to him

That's now entreating, at his risk perhaps,
 Justice for you ! Did he once call those acts

Of simple friendship—bounties, benefits ?

Ch. No : the straight course had been to call them so.
Then, I had flung them back, and kept myself
Unhampered, free as he to win the prize
We both sought. But "the gold was dross," he said :
"He loved me, and I loved him not : why spurn
"A trifle out of superfluity ?
"He had forgotten he had done as much."
So had not I ! Henceforth, try as I could
To take him at his word, there stood by you
My benefactor ; who might speak and laugh
And urge his nothings, even banter me
Before you—but my tongue was tied. A dream !
Let 's wake : your husband . . . how you shake at that !
Good—my revenge !

Eu. Why should I shake ? What forced
Or forces me to be Luitolfo's bride ?

Ch. There 's my revenge, that nothing forces you.
No gratitude, no liking of the eye
Nor longing of the heart, but the poor bond
Of habit—here so many times he came,
So much he spoke,—all these compose the tie
That pulls you from me. Well, he paid my fines,
Nor missed a cloak from wardrobe, dish from table ;
He spoke a good word to the Provost here,
Held me up when my fortunes fell away
—It had not looked so well to let me drop—
Men take pains to preserve a tree-stump, even,
Whose boughs they played beneath—much more a friend.

But one grows tired of seeing, after the first,
Pains spent upon impracticable stuff
Like me. I could not change : you know the rest
I 've spoke my mind too fully out, by chance,
This morning to our Provost ; so, ere night
I leave the city on pain of death. And now
On my account there 's gallant intercession
Goes forward—that 's so graceful ;—and anon
He 'll noisily come back : “ the intercession
“ Was made and fails ; all 's over for us both ;
“ 'T is vain contending ; I would better go.”
And I do go—and straight to you he turns
Light of a load ; and ease of that permits
His visage to repair the natural bland
Æconomy, sore broken late to suit
My discontent. Thus, all are pleased—you, with him,
He with himself, and all of you with me
—“ Who,” say the citizens, “ had done far better
“ In letting people sleep upon their woes,
“ If not possessed with talent to relieve them
“ When once awake ;—but then I had,” they 'll say,
“ Doubtless some unknown compensating pride
“ In what I did ; and as I seem content
“ With ruining myself, why, so should they be.”
And so they are, and so be with his prize
The devil, when he gets them speedily !
Why does not your Luitolfo come ? I long
To don this cloak and take the Lugo path.
It seems you never loved me, then ?

Eu.

Chiappino !

Ch. Never ?*Eu.*

Never.

Ch.

That 's sad. Say what I might,

There was no help from being sure this while
You loved me. Love like mine must have return,
I thought : no river starts but to some sea.
And had you loved me, I could soon devise
Some specious reason why you stifled love,
Some fancied self-denial on your part,
Which made you choose Luitolfo ; so, excepting
From the wide condemnation of all here,
One woman. Well, the other dream may break !
If I knew any heart, as mine loved you,
Loved me, though in the vilest breast 't were lodged,
I should, I think, be forced to love again :
Else there 's no right nor reason in the world.

Eu. " If you knew," say you,—but I did not know.
That 's where you 're blind, Chiappino !—a disease
Which if I may remove, I 'll not repent
The listening to. You cannot, will not, see
How, place you but in every circumstance
Of us, you are just now indignant at,
You 'd be as we.

Ch.

I should be ? . . . that; again !

I, to my friend, my country and my love,
Be as Luitolfo and these Faentines ?

Eu. As we.*Ch.*

Now, I 'll say something to remember.

I trust in nature for the stable laws
 Of beauty and utility—Spring shall plant,
 And Autumn garner to the end of time :
 I trust in God—the right shall be the right
 And other than the wrong, while he endures :
 I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
 The outward and the inward, nature's good
 And God's : so, seeing these men and myself,
 Having a right to speak, thus do I speak.—
 I'll not curse—God bears with them, well may I—
 But I—protest against their claiming me.
 I simply say, if that 's allowable,
 I would not (broadly) do as they have done.
 —God curse this townful of born slaves, bred slaves,
 Branded into the blood and bone, slaves ! Curse
 Whoever loves, above his liberty,
 House, land or life ! and . . . [*A knocking without.*
 —bless my hero-friend,
 Luitolfo !

Eu. How he knocks !

Ch. The peril, lady !

“ Chiappino, I have run a risk—a risk !

“ For when I prayed the Provost (he 's my friend)

“ To grant you a week's respite of the sentence

“ That confiscates your goods, exiles yourself,

“ He shrugged his shoulder—I say, shrugged it ! Yes,

“ And fright of that drove all else from my head.

“ Here 's a good purse of *scudi* : off with you,

“ Lest of that shrug come what God only knows !

"The *scudi*—friend, they're trash—no thanks, I beg!
 "Take the north gate,—for San Vitale's suburb,
 "Whose double taxes you appealed against,
 "In discomposure at your ill-success
 "Is apt to stone you : there, there—only go !
 "Beside, Eulalia here looks sleepily.
 "Shake . . . oh, you hurt me, so you squeeze my wrist !"
 —Is it not thus you 'll speak, adventurous friend ?

[As he opens the door, LUITOLFO rushes in, his garments disordered.]

Eu. Luitolfo ! Blood ?

Luit. There 's more—and more of it !
 Eulalia—take the garment ! No—you, friend !
 You take it and the blood from me—you dare !

Eu. Oh, who has hurt you ? where 's the wound ?

Ch. "Who," say you ?

The man with many a touch of virtue yet !
 The Provost's friend has proved too frank of speech,
 And this comes of it. Miserable hound !
 'This comes of temporizing, as I said !
 Here 's fruit of your smooth speeches and soft looks !
 Now see my way ! As God lives, I go straight
 To the palace and do justice, once for all !

Luit. What says he ?

Ch. I 'll do justice on him.

Luit. Him ?

Ch. The Provost.

Luit. I 've just killed him.

Eu. Oh, my God !

Luit. My friend, they 're on my trace ; they 'll have me—now !

They 're round him, busy with him : soon they 'll find
He 's past their help, and then they 'll be on me !
Chiappino, save Eulalia ! I forget . . .
Were you not bound for . . .

Ch. Lugo ?

Luit. Ah—yes—yes !

That was the point I prayed of him to change.
Well, go—be happy ! Is Eulalia safe ?
They 're on me !

Ch. 'T is through me they reach you, then !
Friend, seem the man you are ! Lock arms—that 's right !

Now tell me what you 've done ; explain how you
That still professed forbearance, still preached peace,
Could bring yourself . . .

Luit. What was peace for, Chiappino ?
I tried peace : did that promise, when peace failed,
Strife should not follow ? All my peaceful days
Were just the prelude to a day like this.
I cried "You call me 'friend' : save my true friend !
" Save him, or lose me ! "

Ch. But you never said
You meant to tell the Provost thus and thus.

Luit. Why should I say it ? What else did I mean ?

Ch. Well ? He persisted ?

Luit. —"Would so order it
" You should not trouble him too soon again."

I saw a meaning in his eye and lip ;
 I poured my heart's store of indignant words
 Out on him : then—I know not ! He retorted,
 And I . . . some staff lay there to hand—I think
 He bad'e his servants thrust me out—I struck . . .
 Ah, they come ! Fly you, save yourselves, you two !
 The dead back-weight of the beheading axe !
 The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the gadge !

Eu. They do come ! Torches in the Place ! Farewell,
 Chiappino ! You can work no good to us—
 Much to yourself ; believe not, all the world
 Must needs be cursed henceforth !

Ch. And you ?

Eu. I stay.

Ch. Ha, ha ! Now, listen ! I am master here !
 This was my coarse disguise ; this paper shows
 My path of flight and place of refuge—see—
 Lugo, Argenta, past San Nicolo,
 Ferrara, then to Venice and all 's safe !
 Put on the cloak ! His people have to fetch
 A compass round about. There 's time enough
 Ere they can reach us, so you straightway make
 For Lugo . . nay, he hears not ! On with it—
 The cloak, Luitolfo, do you hear me ? See—
 He obeys he knows not how. Then, if I must—
 Answer me ! Do you know the Lugo gate ?

Eu. The north-west gate, over the bridge ?

Luit. I know.

Ch. Well, there—you are not frightened ? all my route

traced in that : at Venice you escape
their power. Eulalia, I am master here !

*[Shouts from without. He pushes out LUITOLFO, who
complies mechanically.]*

a time ! Nay, help me with him—so ! He 's gone.

Eu. What have you done ? On you, perchance, all
know

the Provost's hater, will men's vengeance fall
s our accomplice.

Ch. Mere accomplice ? See !

[Putting on LUITOLFO's vest.]

ow, lady, am I true to my profession,
t one of these ?

Eu. You take Luitolfo's place ?

Ch. Die for him.

Eu. Well done ! *[Shouts increase.]*

Ch. How the people tarry !

can't be silent ; I must speak : or sing—
ow natural to sing now !

Eu. Hush and pray !

e are to die ; but even I perceive
is not a very hard thing so to die.
y cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes,
or Cesca, suffers more from one day's life
ith the stern husband ; Tisbe's heart goes forth
ch evening after that wild son of hers,
o track his thoughtless footstep through the streets :
ow easy for them both to die like this !
am not sure that I could live as they.

Ch. Here they come, crowds! They pass the gate?
Yes!--No!--

One torch is in the courtyard. Here flock all.

Eu. At least Luitolfo has escaped. What cries!

Ch. If they would drag one to the market-place,
One might speak there!

Eu. List, list!

Ch. They mount the steps.

Enter the Populace.

Ch. I killed the Provost!

The Populace [speaking together.] 'T was Chiappino,
friends!

Our saviour! The best man at last as first!
He who first made us feel what chains we wore,
He also strikes the blow that shatters them,
He at last saves us—our best citizen!
—Oh, have you only courage to speak now?
My eldest son was christened a year since
“Cino” to keep Chiappino’s name in mind—
Cino, for shortness merely, you observe!
The city’s in our hands. The guards are fled.
Do you, the cause of all, come down—come up—
Come out to counsel us, our chief, our king,
Whate’er rewards you! Choose your own reward!
The peril over, its reward begins!
Come and harangue us in the market-place!

Eu. Chiappino?

Ch. Yes—I understand your eyes!

You think I should have promptlier disowned

This deed with its strange unforeseen success,
 In favour of Luitolfo. But the peril,
 So far from ended, hardly seems begun.
 To-morrow, rather, when a calm succeeds,
 We easily shall make him full amends :
 And meantime—if we save them as they pray,
 And justify the deed by its effects ?

Eu. You would, for worlds, you had denied at once.

Ch. I know my own intention, be assured !
 All 's well. Precede us, fellow-citizens !

ACT II.

The Market-place. LUITOLFO in disguise mingling with the Populace assembled opposite the Provost's Palace.

1st Bystander (to LUIT.) You, a friend of Luitolfo's ?
 Then, your friend is vanished,—in all probability killed
 on the night that his patron the tyrannical Provost was
 loyally suppressed here, exactly a month ago, by our
 illustrious fellow-citizen, thrice-noble saviour, and new
 Provost that is like to be, this very morning,—Chiappino !

Luit. He the new Provost ?

2nd. Up those steps will he go, and beneath yonder
 pillar stand, while Ogniben, the Pope's Legate from
 Ravenna, reads the new dignitary's title to the people,
 according to established custom : for which reason, there
 is the assemblage you inquire about.

Luit. Chiappino—the late Provost's successor? Impossible! But tell me of that presently. What I would know first of all is, wherefore Luitolfo must so necessarily have been killed on that memorable night?

3rd. You were Luitolfo's friend? So was I. Never, if you will credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a milk-sop. He, with all the opportunities in the world, furnished by daily converse with our oppressor, would not stir a finger to help us: and, when Chiappino rose in solitary majesty and . . . how does one go on saying? . . . dealt the godlike blow,—this Luitolfo, not unreasonably fearing the indignation of an aroused and liberated people, fled precipitately. He may have got trodden to death in the press at the south-east gate, when the Provost's guards fled through it to Ravenna, with their wounded master,—if he did not rather hang himself under some hedge.

Luit. Or why not simply have lain perdue in some quiet corner,—such as San Cassiano, where his estate was,—receiving daily intelligence from some sure friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here—how, for instance, the Provost was not dead, after all, only wounded—or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost—and thus Luitolfo be enabled to watch a favourable opportunity for returning? Might it not have been so?

3rd. Why, he may have taken that care of himself, certainly, for he came of a cautious stock. I'll tell you

ow his uncle, just such another gingerly treader on ptoes with finger on lip,—how he met his death in the great plague-year: *dico vobis* ! Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house ; then scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger.—And so would he begin ; but, as he arrived at thirteen, we will say, —thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene of Prague, this exhausted to much of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was nearly spent,—consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigour and persistence enough to suck you dry latent venom out of the heart of a stone—Ha, ha !

Luit. [*Aside.*] (If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me.) Luitolfo is dead then, one may conclude?

3rd. Why, he had a house here, and a woman to whom he was affianced ; and as they both pass naturally to the new Provost, his friend and heir . . .

Luit. Ah, I suspected you of imposing on me with your pleasantries ! I know Chiappino better.

1st. (Our friend has the bile ! After all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities.) Pray, how much may you know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night ?

Luit. It is most to the purpose, that I know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost, you now charge him with proposing to accept.

1st. Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memorable. Up we rose, a mass of us, men, women, children; out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant; we were to defy the world: but, next grey morning, "What will Rome say?" began everybody. You know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome. And quietly into the town, by the Ravenna road, comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogniben by name, with the quality of Pontifical Legate; trots briskly through the streets humming a "*Cur fremuere gentes*," and makes directly for the Provost's Palace—there it faces you. "One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!" (laughing gently to himself)—"Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps under the pillar—So! And now, my revolters and good friends, what do you want? The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost; and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resort to another method: 't is I come, and not another, from a certain love I confess to, of composing differences. So, do you understand, you are about to experience this unheard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile: I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves. And now, pray, what does

please you? To live without any government at all? Or having decided for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a justice anterior to all institutions,—and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world must at length unite and put down such a den of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has just taken place,—once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him; and this so earnestly, that one may be sure he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find admission to speak with him late last evening. I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to hear what you will do next.” And thus he ran on, on, easily and volubly, till he seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of law, order, and paternal government by somebody from rather a distance. All our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser; but that Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly, and set things right again.

Luit. Do you see? I recognise him there!

3rd. Ay but, mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest period in praise of a pure republic,—“And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?”—returns the Legate: thereupon speaking for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate government by the best and wisest. And it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at

bottom between this and Chiappino's theory, place but each in its proper light. "Oh, are you there?" quoth Chiappino: "Ay, in that, I agree," returns Chiappino: and so on.

Luit. But did Chiappino cede at once to this?

1st. Why, not altogether at once. For instance, he said that the difference between him and all his fellows was, that they seemed all wishing to be kings in one or another way,—“whereas what right,” asked he, “has any man to wish to be superior to another?”—whereat, “Ah, sir,” answers the Legate, “this is the death of me, so often as I expect something is really going to be revealed to us by you clearer-seers, deeper-thinkers—this—that your right-hand (to speak by a figure) should be found taking up the weapon it displayed so ostentatiously, not to destroy any dragon in our path, as was prophesied, but simply to cut off its own fellow left-hand: yourself set about attacking yourself. For see now! Here are you who, I make sure, glory exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the soul, its divine impulses, and so forth; and with such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that same inherent nobility, which are apt to waylay us, the weaker ones, in the road of life. And when we look eagerly to see them fall before you, lo, round you wheel, only the left-hand gets the blow; one proof of the soul's nobility destroys simply another proof, quite as good, of the same, for you are found delivering an opinion like this! Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed, to subdue, to

be better than, and a king over, one's fellows,—all that you so disclaim,—but the very tendency yourself are most proud of, and under another form, would oppose to it,—only in a lower stage of manifestation? You do n't want to be vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor fashion—to have me hold solemnly up your gown's tail, or hand you an express of the last importance from the Pope, with all these bystanders noticing how unconcerned you look the while: but neither does our gaping friend, the burgess yonder, want the other kind of kingship, that consists in understanding better than his fellows this and similar points of human nature, nor to roll under his tongue this sweeter morsel still,—the feeling that, through immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he rather thinks, above you and me!" And so chatting, they glided off arm-in-arm.

Luit. And the result is . .

1st. Why that, a month having gone by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love—at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's wealth—becomes the first inhabitant of Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the Provostship; which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way! He will follow presently.

Luit. (*withdrawing a little.*) I understand the drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever. Yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger: wherefore, disregarding her injunction to continue in my retreat and await the result of, what she

called, some experiment yet in process—I hastened here without her leave or knowledge : what could I else ? But if this they say be true—if it were for such a purpose, she and Chiappino kept me away . . . Oh, no, no ! I must confront him and her before I believe this of them. And at the word, see !

Enter CHIAPPINO and EULALIA.

Eu. We part here, then ? The change in your principles would seem to be complete.

Ch. Now, why refuse to see that in my present course I change no principles, only re-adapt them and more adroitly ? I had despaired of, what you may call the material instrumentality of life ; of ever being able to rightly operate on mankind through such a deranged machinery as the existing modes of government : but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary limbs once more into immediate communication with, and subjection to, the soul I am about to bestow on them—do you see ? Why should one desire to invent, as long as it remains possible to renew and transform ? When all further hope of the old organization shall be extinct, then, I grant you, it may be time to try and create another.

Eu. And there being discoverable some hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system of absolute government by a Provost here, you mean to take your time about endeavouring to realize those visions of a perfect State, we once heard of ?

Ch. Say, I would fain realize my conception of a palace, for instance, and that there is, abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one perfectly. Here, in the market-place is my allotted building-ground ; here I stand without a stone to lay, or a labourer to help me,—stand, too, during a short day of life, close on which the night comes. On the other hand, circumstances suddenly offer me (turn and see it) the old Provost's house to experiment upon — ruinous, if you please, wrongly constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble now. But materials abound, a crowd of workmen offer their services ; here, exists yet a Hall of Audience of originally noble proportions, there a Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough : and I may restore, enlarge, abolish or unite these to heart's content. Ought I not make the best of such an opportunity, rather than continue to gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down, never to rise again ? Since you cannot understand this nor me, it is better we should part as you desire.

Eu. So, the love breaks away too !

Ch. No, rather my soul's capacity for love widens—needs more than one object to content it,—and, being better instructed, will not persist in seeing all the component parts of love in what is only a single part,—nor in finding that so many and so various loves, are all united in the love of a woman,—manifold uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, sceptre and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound

thing. The intellectual part of my love I shall give to men, the mighty dead or the illustrious living; and determine to call a mere sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible. What do I lose?

Eu. Nay, I only think, what do I lose? and, one more word — which shall complete my instruction — does friendship go too? What of Luitolfo, the author of your present prosperity?

Ch. How the author?—

Eu. That blow now called yours . .

Ch. Struck without principle or purpose, as by a blind natural operation: yet to which all my thought and life directly and advisedly tended. I would have struck it, and could not: he would have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine—a final action with him, from the first effect of which he fled away,—a mere first step with me, on which I base a whole mighty superstructure of good to follow. Could he get good from it?

Eu. So we profess, so we perform!

Enter OGNIBEN. *EULALIA stands apart.*

Ogni. I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts! By your leave, sir! Perform? What does the lady say of performing?

Ch. Only the trite saying, that we must not trust profession, only performance.

Ogni. She 'll not say that, sir, when she knows you longer; you 'll instruct her better. Ever judge of men

by their professions! For though the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust it and know the man by it, I say—not by his performance; which is half the world's work, interfere as the world needs must, with its accidents and circumstances: the profession was purely the man's own. I judge people by what they might be,—not are, nor will be.

Ch. But have there not been found, too, performing natures, not merely promising?

Ogni. Plenty. Little Bindo of our town, for instance, promised his friend, great ugly Masaccio, once, “I will repay you!”—for a favour done him. So, when his father came to die, and Bindo succeeded to the inheritance, he sends straightway for Masaccio and shares all with him—gives him half the land, half the money, half the kegs of wine in the cellar. “Good,” say you: and it is good. But had little Bindo found himself possessor of all this wealth some five years before—on the happy night when Masaccio procured him that interview in the garden with his pretty cousin Lisa—instead of being the beggar he then was,—I am bound to believe that in the warm moment of promise he would have given away all the wine-kegs and all the money and all the land, and only reserved to himself some hut on a hill-top hard by, whence he might spend his life in looking and seeing his friend enjoy himself: he meant fully that much, but the world interfered.—

To our business! Did I understand you just now within-doors? You are not going to marry your old friend's love, after all?

Ch. I must have a woman that can sympathize with, and appreciate me. I told you.

Ogni. Oh, I remember! you, the greater nature, needs must have a lesser one (—avowedly lesser—contest with you on that score would never do)—such a nature must comprehend you, as the phrase is, accompany and testify of your greatness from point to point onward. Why, that were being not merely as great as yourself, but greater considerably! Meantime, might not the more bounded nature as reasonably count on your appreciation of it, rather?—on your keeping close by it, so far as you both go together, and then going on by yourself as far as you please? Thus God serves us.

Ch. And yet a woman that could understand the whole of me, to whom I could reveal alike the strength and the weakness—

Ogni. Ah my friend, wish for nothing so foolish! Worship your love, give her the best of you to see; be to her like the western lands (they bring us such strange news of) to the Spanish Court; send her only your lumps of gold, fans of feathers, your spirit-like birds, and fruits and gems! So shall you, what is unseen of you, be supposed altogether a paradise by her,—as these western lands by Spain: though I warrant there is filth, red baboons, ugly reptiles and squalor enough, which they bring Spain as few samples of as possible.

Do you want your mistress to respect your body generally? Offer her your mouth to kiss: don't strip off your boot and put your foot to her lips! You understand my humour by this time? I help men to carry out their own principles: if they please to say two and two make five, I assent, so they will but go on and say, four and four make ten.

Ch. But these are my private affairs; what I desire you to occupy yourself about, is my public appearance presently: for when the people hear that I am appointed Provost, though you and I may thoroughly discern—and easily, too—the right principle at bottom of such a movement, and how my republicanism remains thoroughly unaltered, only takes a form of expression hitherto commonly judged (and heretofore by myself) incompatible with its existence,—when thus I reconcile myself to an old form of government instead of proposing a new one . . .

Ogni. Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say,—New truths, old truths! sirs, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world; we know all we shall ever know: and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we do know this and the other matter, that men get called prophets, poets and the like. A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard-

thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others: and so he restates it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time. As for adding to the original stock of truths,—impossible! Thus, you see the expression of them is the grand business:—you have got a truth in your head about the right way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it which now you confess to be imperfect. But what then? There is truth in falsehood, falsehood in truth. No man ever told one great truth, that I know, without the help of a good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones. And as when a child comes in breathlessly and relates a strange story, you try to conjecture from the very falsities in it, what the reality was,—do not conclude that he saw nothing in the sky, because he assuredly did not see a flying horse there as he says,—so, through the contradictory expression, do you see, men should look painfully for, and trust to arrive eventually at, what you call the true principle at bottom. Ah, what an answer is there! to what will it not prove applicable?—"Contradictions? Of course there were," say you!

Ch. Still, the world at large may call it inconsistency, and what shall I urge in reply?

Ogni. Why, look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer—you begin to perceive that, when all's done and said, both great parties in the State, the advocates of change in the present system of things, and the opponents of it,

patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good ; and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances : to which result they contribute in equal proportions, those who spend their life in pushing it onward, as those who give theirs to the business of pulling it back. Now, if you found the world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you : but it steadily advances. You rejoice to see ! By the side of such a rejoicer, the man who only winks as he keeps cunning and quiet, and says, " Let yonder hot-headed fellow fight out my battle ! I, for one, shall win in the end by the blows he gives, and which I ought to be giving "—even he seems graceful in his avowal, when one considers that he might say, " I shall win quite as much by the blows your antagonist gives him, blows from which he saves me—I thank the antagonist equally ! " Moreover, you may enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosity with age and experience . . .

Ch. And naturally time must wear off such asperities : the bitterest adversaries get to discover certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies—do they not ?

Ogni. Ay, had the young David but sat first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such common sympathies. He of Gath, as is recorded, was born of a father and mother, had brothers and sisters like another man,—they, no more

than the sons of Jesse, were used to eat each other. But, for the sake of one broad antipathy that had existed from the beginning, David slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a spoil of it, and after ate his cheeses alone, with the better appetite, for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eye-sight, go on discovering much good on the worse side, remember that the same process should proportionably magnify and demonstrate to you the much more good on the better side! And when I profess no sympathy for the Goliaths of our time, and you object that a large nature should sympathize with every form of intelligence, and see the good in it, however limited—I answer, “So I do; but preserve the proportions of my sympathy, however finelier or widelier I may extend its action.” I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only: but I hope I shall also continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms of matter, where already everybody sees no foulness at all. I must retain, too, my old power of selection, and choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts; else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has his archangels and consorts with them: though he made too, and intimately sees what is good in, the worm. Observe, I speak only as you profess to think and so ought to speak: I do justice to your own principles, that is all.

Ch. But you very well know that the two parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics. What more disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly

the newly emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favour, the very measures of precaution, which pressed soreliest on himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from? Do the classes, hitherto without opinion, get leave to express it? there follows a confederacy immediately, from which—exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you!

Ogni. And a journey over the sea to you! That is the generous way. Cry—"Emancipated slaves, the first excess, and off I go!" The first time a poor devil, who has been bastinadoed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so, begins pettishly, while he rubs his soles, "Woe be to whoever brings anything in the shape of a stick this way!"—you, rather than give up the very innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with,—you go away, to everybody's sorrow. Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as "Let no man indulge in owning a stick which is not thick enough to chastise our slaves, if need require!" Well, there are pre-ordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether; yet I am rather sorry you should see it so clearly: for, do you know what is to—all but save you at the Day of Judgment, all you men of genius? It is this; that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to the end of your life, in one effort at setting up your own genius in his place,—still, the last, bitterest concession wrung with the utmost unwillingness from the

experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably—would one think it?—that the rest of mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, stood not, nor ever could stand, just on a level and equality with yourselves. That will be a point in the favour of all such, I hope and believe.

Ch. Why, men of genius are usually charged, I think, with doing just the reverse ; and at once acknowledging the natural inequality of mankind, by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to, the civil distinctions which represent it. You wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank.

Ogni. Not I (always on your own ground and showing, be it noted !) Who doubts that, with a weapon to brandish, a man is the more formidable? Titles and badges are exercised as such a weapon, to which you and I look up wistfully. We could pin lions with it moreover, while in its present owner's hands it hardly prods rats. Nay, better than a mere weapon of easy mastery and obvious use, it is a mysterious divining rod that may serve us in undreamed-of ways. Beauty, strength, intellect—men often have none of these, and yet conceive pretty accurately what kind of advantages they would bestow on the possessor. We know at least what it is we make up our mind to forego, and so can apply the fittest substitute in our power. Wanting beauty, we cultivate good humour ; missing wit, we get riches : but the mystic unimaginable operation of that gold collar and string of Latin names which suddenly turned poor stupid

little peevish Cecco of our town into natural lord of the best of us—a Duke, he is now—there indeed is a virtue to be revered !

Ch. Ay, by the vulgar : not by Messere Stiatta the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than anybody.

Ogni. What else should Stiatta pay court to ? He has talent, not honour and riches : men naturally covet what they have not.

Ch. No, or Cecco would covet talent, which he has not, whereas he covets more riches, of which he has plenty, already.

Ogni. Because a purse added to a purse makes the holder twice as rich : but just such another talent as Stiatta's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him ? Give the talent a purse indeed, to do something with ! But lo, how we keep the good people waiting ! I only desired to do justice to the noble sentiments which animate you, and which you are too modest to duly enforce. Come, to our main business : shall we ascend the steps ? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people ; they know your antecedents, and will accept you with a joyful unanimity : whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up ! Are you nerving yourself to an effort ? Beware the disaster of Messere Stiatta we were talking of ! who, determining to keep an equal mind and constant face on whatever might be the fortune of his last new poem with our townsmen, heard too plainly "hiss, hiss, hiss," increase every moment. Till at last the

man fell senseless : not perceiving that the portentous sounds had all the while been issuing from between his own nobly clenched teeth, and nostrils narrowed by resolve.

Ch. Do you begin to throw off the mask?—to jest with me, having got me effectually into your trap?

Ogni. Where is the trap, my friend? You hear what I engage to do, for my part : you, for yours, have only to fulfil your promise made just now within doors, of professing unlimited obedience to Rome's authority in my person. And I shall authorize no more than the simple re-establishment of the Provostship and the conferment of its privileges upon yourself : the only novel stipulation being a birth of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

Ch. And that stipulation?

Ogni. Just the obvious one—that in the event of the discovery of the actual assailant of the late Provost . . .

Ch. Ha !

Ogni. Why, he shall suffer the proper penalty, of course ; what did you expect?

Ch. Who heard of this?

Ogni. Rather, who needed to hear of this?

Ch. Can it be, the popular rumour never reached you . . .

Ogni. Many more such rumours reach me, friend, than I choose to receive ; those which wait longest have best chance. Has the present one sufficiently waited? Now is its time for entry with effect. See the good people crowding about yonder palace-steps—which we may not

have to ascend, after all ! My good friends ! (nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose)—who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost ? His successor desires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt, bare justice we all anticipate. Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know ?

Luitolfo. [*coming forward.*] I !

All. Luitolfo !

Luit. I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now, to relieve my friend of an unearned responsibility. Having taken thought, I am grown stronger : I shall shrink from nothing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino—we are friends still : I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seemed at first. So, they tell me, my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience.

Eu. I was determined to justify my choice, Chiappino ; to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

Ogni. Now, in these last ten minutes of silence, what have I been doing, deem you ? Putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine, I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text, "Let whoso thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." To your house, Luitolfo ! Still,

silent, my patriotic friend? Well, that is a good sign however. And you will go aside for a time? That is better still. I understand: it would be easy for you to die of remorse here on the spot and shock us all, but you mean to live and grow worthy of coming back to us one day. There, I will tell everybody; and you only do right to believe you must get better as you get older. All men do so: they are worst in childhood, improve in manhood, and get ready in old age for another world. Youth, with its beauty and grace, would seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to make us partly endurable till we have time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid; when they leave us. The sweetest child we all smile on for his pleasant want of the whole world to break up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in it—would be rudely handled by that world's inhabitants, if he retained those angelic infantine desires when he had grown six feet high, black and bearded. But, little by little, he sees fit to forego claim after claim on the world, puts up with a less and less share of its good as his proper portion; and when the octogenarian asks barely a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks you as for his full allowance and right in the common good of life,—hoping nobody may murder him,—he who began by asking and expecting the whole of us to bow down in worship to him,—why, I say he is advanced, far onward, very far, nearly out of sight like our friend Chiappino yonder. And now—(ay, good-bye to you! He turns round the north-west gate: going to Lugo again? Good-

bye !)—And now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home ! I have known *Four-and-twenty* leaders of revolts.

Agnes S. ...
Nov 20 1898

L U R I A.

A TRAGEDY.

I DEDICATE

THIS LAST ATTEMPT FOR THE PRESENT AT DRAMATIC POETRY

TO A GREAT DRAMATIC POET ;

“ WISHING WHAT I WRITE MAY BE READ BY HIS LIGHT : ”

IF A PHRASE ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED, BY NOT THE LEAST

WORTHY OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,

TO SHAKESPEARE,

MAY BE APPLIED HERE, BY ONE WHOSE SOLE PRIVILEGE IS IN

A GRATEFUL ADMIRATION,

TO WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

London, 1846.

PERSONS.

LURIA, a Moor, Commander of the Florentine Forces.

HUSAIN, a Moor, his friend.

PUCCIO, the old Florentine Commander, now LURIA's Chief Officer.

BRACCIO, Commissary of the Republic of Florence.

JACOPO (LAPO), his Secretary.

TIBURZIO, Commander of the Pisans.

DOMIZIA, a noble Florentine Lady.

TIME, 14—.

SCENE.—LURIA'S *Camp between Florence and Pisa.*

L U R I A.

ACT I.

MORNING.

BRACCIO, *as dictating to his Secretary* ; PUCCIO *standing by*.

Brac. [*to Puc.*] Then, you join battle in an hour?

Puc. Not I;

Luria, the captain.

Brac. [*to the Sec.*] "In an hour, the battle."

To Puc.] Sir, let your eye run o'er this loose digest,

And see if very much of your report

Have slipped away through my civilian phrase.

Does this instruct the Signory aright

How army stands with army?

Puc. [*taking the paper.*] All seems here :

—That Luria, seizing with our city's force

The several points of vantage, hill and plain,

Shuts Pisa safe from help on every side,

And, baffling the Lucchese arrived too late,

Must, in the battle he delivers now,

Beat her best troops and first of chiefs.

Brac. So sure?

Tiburzio 's a consummate captain too!

Puc. Luria holds Pisa's fortune in his hand.

Brac. [*to the Sec.*] "The Signory hold Pisa in their hand."

Your own proved soldiership 's our warrant, sir :
So, while my secretary ends his task,
Have out two horsemen, by the open roads,
To post with it to Florence !

Puc. [*returning the paper.*] All seems here ;
Unless . . . Ser Braccio, 't is my last report !
Since Pisa's outbreak, and my overthrow,
And Luria's hastening at the city's call
To save her, as he only could, no doubt ;
Till now that she is saved or sure to be,—
Whatever you tell Florence, I tell you :
Each day's note you, her Commissary, make
Of Luria's movements, I myself supply.
No youngster am I longer, to my cost ;
Therefore while Florence gloried in her choice
And vaunted Luria, whom but Luria, still,
As if zeal, courage, prudence, conduct, faith,
Had never met in any man before,
I saw no pressing need to swell the cry.
But now, this last report and I have done—
So, ere to-night comes with its roar of praise,
'T were not amiss if some one old i' the trade
Subscribed with, " True, for once rash counsel 's best.
" This Moor of the bad faith and doubtful race,
" This boy to whose untried sagacity,
" Raw valour, Florence trusts without reserve

“ The charge to save her,—justifies her choice ;
 “ In no point has this stranger failed his friends :
 “ Now praise ! ” I say this, and it is not here.

Brac. [*to the Sec.*] Write, “ Puccio, superseded in the charge,

“ By Luria, bears full witness to his worth,
 “ And no reward our Signory can give
 “ Their champion but he ’ll back it cheerfully.”

Aught more ? Five minutes hence, both messengers !

[PUCCIO goes.]

Brac. [*after a pause, and while he slowly tears the paper into shreds.*]

I think . . . (pray God, I hold in fit contempt
 This warfare’s noble art and ordering,
 And,—once the brace of prizers fairly matched,
 Poleaxe with poleaxe, knife with knife as good,—
 Spit properly at what men term their skill !—)
 Yet here I think our fighter has the odds.
 With Pisa’s strength diminished thus and thus,
 Such points of vantage in our hands and such,
 Lucca still off the stage, too,—all ’s assured :
 Luria must win this battle. Write the Court,
 That Luria’s trial end and sentence pass !

Sec. Patron,—

Brac. Ay, Lapo ?

Sec. If you trip, I fall ;

’T is in self-interest I speak—

Brac. Nay, nay,

You overshoot the mark, my Lapo ! Nay ’

Sec. Sir, no, no, no,—the danger, and your spirit
 At watch and ward? Where 's danger on your part,
 With that thin flitting instantaneous steel
 Gainst the blind bull-front of a brute-force world?
 If Luria, that 's to perish sure as fate,
 Should have been really guiltless after all?

Brac. Ah, you have thought that?

Sec. Here I sit, your scribe,
 And in and out goes Luria, days and nights;
 This Puccio comes; the Moor his other friend,
 Husain; they talk—all that 's feigned easily;
 He speaks (I would not listen if I could),
 Reads, orders, counsels:—but he rests sometimes,—
 I see him stand and eat, sleep stretched an hour
 On the lynx-skins, yonder; hold his bared black arms
 Into the sun from the tent-opening; laugh
 When his horse drops the forage from his teeth
 And neighs to hear him hum his Moorish songs.
 That man believes in Florence, as the saint
 Tied to the wheel believes in God.

Brac. How strange!

You too have thought that!

Sec. Do but you think too,
 And all is saved! I only have to write,
 "The man seemed false awhile, proves true at last,
 "Bury it" . . . so I write the Signory . . .
 "Bury this trial in your breast for ever,
 "Blot it from things or done or dreamed about!
 "So Luria shall receive his meed to-day

“ With no suspicion what reverse was near,—
“ As if no meteoric finger hushed
“ The doom-word just on the destroyer’s lip,
“ Motioned him off, and let life’s sun fall straight.”

Brac. [*looks to the wall of the tent.*] Did he draw that ?

Sec.

With charcoal, when the watch
Made the report at midnight ; Lady Domizia
Spoke of the unfinished Duomo, you remember ;
That is his fancy how a Moorish front
Might join to, and complete, the body,—a sketch,—
And again where the cloak hangs, yonder in the shadow.

Brac. He loves that woman.

Sec.

She is sent the spy
Of Florence,—spies on you as you on him :
Florence, if only for Domizia’s sake,
Is surely safe. What shall I write ?

Brac.

I see—

A Moorish front, nor of such ill design !
Lapo, there ’s one thing plain and positive ;
Man seeks his own good at the whole world’s cost.
What ? If to lead our troops, stand forth our chiefs,
And hold our fate, and see us at their beck,
Yet render up the charge when peace return,
Have ever proved too much for Florentines,
Even for the best and bravest of ourselves—
If in the struggle when the soldier’s sword
Should sink its point before the statist’s pen,
And the calm head replace the violent hand,
Virtue on virtue still have fallen away

Before ambition with unvarying fate,
Till Florence' self at last in bitterness
Be forced to own such falls the natural end,
And, sparing further to expose her sons
To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,
Declare, " The foreigner, one not my child,
" Shall henceforth lead my troops, reach height by height
" The glory, then descend into the shame ;
" So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
" And punishment the easier task for me : "
—If on the best of us such brand she set,
Can I suppose an utter alien here,
This Luria, our inevitable foe,
Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
Born free from many ties that bind the rest
Of common faith in Heaven or hope on earth,
No past with us, no future,—such a spirit
Shall hold the path from which our staunchest broke,
Stand firm where every famed precursor fell ?
My Lapo, I will frankly say, these proofs
So duly noted of the man's intent,
Are for the doting fools at home, not me
The charges here, they may be true or false :
—What is set down ? Errors and oversights,
A dallying interchange of courtesies
With Pisa's General,—all that, hour by hour,
Puccio's pale discontent has furnished us,
Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts,
Now overhazard, overcaution now ;

Even that he loves this lady who believes
She outwits Florence, and whom Florence posted
By my procurement here, to spy on me,
Lest I one minute lose her from my sight—
She who remembering her whole House's fall,
That nest of traitors strangled in the birth,
Now labours to make Luria (poor device
As plain) the instrument of her revenge !
—That she is ever at his ear to prompt
Inordinate conceptions of his worth,
Exorbitant belief in worth's reward,
And after, when sure disappointment follows,
Proportionable rage at such a wrong—
Why, all these reasons, while I urge them most,
Weigh with me less than least ; as nothing weigh.
Upon that broad man's-heart of his, I go :
On what I know must be, yet while I live
Shall never be, because I live and know.
Brute-force shall not rule Florence ! Intellect
May rule her, bad or good as chance supplies,—
But intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
And intellect's tradition so kept up !
Till the good come—'t was intellect that ruled,
Not brute-force bringing from the battle-field
The attributes of wisdom, foresight's graces
We lent it there to lure its grossness on ;
All which it took for earnest and kept safe
To show against us in our market-place,
Just as the plumes and tags and swordsman's-gea

(Fetched from the camp where, at their foolish best,
 When all was done they frightened nobody)
 Perk in our faces in the street, forsooth,
 With our own warrant and allowance. No!
 The whole procedure's overcharged,—its end
 In too strict keeping with the bad first step.
 To conquer Pisa was sheer inspiration?
 Well then, to perish for a single fault,
 Let that be simple justice!—There, my Lapo!
 A Moorish front ill suits our Duomo's body:
 Blot it out—and bid Luria's sentence come!

[LURIA, *who, with DOMIZIA, has entered unobserved at the close of the last phrase, now advancing.*

And Luria, Luria, what of Luria now?

Brac. Ah, you so close, sir? Lady Domizia too?
 I said it needs must be a busy moment
 For one like you; that you were now i' the thick
 Of your duties, doubtless, while we idlers sat . . .

Lur. No—in that paper,—it was in that paper
 What you were saying!

Brac. Oh—my day's dispatch!
 I censure you to Florence: will you see?

Lur. See your dispatch, your last, for the first time?
 Well, if I should, now? For in truth, Domizia,
 He would be forced to set about another,
 In his sly cool way, the true Florentine,
 To mention that important circumstance.
 So, while he wrote I should gain time, such time!
 Do not send this!

Brac.

And wherefore ?

Lur.

These Lucchese

Are not arrived—they never will arrive !
 And I must fight to-day, arrived or not,
 And I shall beat Tiburzio, that is sure :
 And then will be arriving his Lucchese,
 But slowly, oh so slowly, just in time
 To look upon my battle from the hills,
 Like a late moon, of use to nobody !
 And I must break my battle up, send forth,
 Surround on this side, hold in check on that.
 Then comes to-morrow, we negotiate,
 You make me send for fresh instructions home,
 —Incompleteness, incompleteness !

Brac.

Ah, we scribes !

Why, I had registered that very point,
 The non-appearance of our foes' ally,
 As a most happy fortune ; both at once
 Were formidable : singly faced, each falls.

Lur. So, no great battle for my Florentines !
 No crowning deed, decisive and complete,
 For all of them, the simple as the wise,
 Old, young, alike, that do not understand
 Our wearisome pedantic art of war,
 By which we prove retreat may be success,
 Delay—best speed,—half loss, at times,—whole gain :
 They want results—as if it were their fault !
 And you, with warmest wish to be my friend,
 Will not be able now to simply say

"Your servant has performed his task—enough !

"You ordered, he has executed : good !

"Now walk the streets in holiday attire,

"Congratulate your friends, till noon strikes fierce,

"Then form bright groups beneath the Duomo's shade !"

No, you will have to argue and explain,

Persuade them, all is not so ill in the end,

Tease, tire them out ! Arrive, arrive, Lucchese !

Dom. Well, you will triumph for the past enough,

Whatever be the present chance ; no service

Falls to the ground with Florence : she awaits

Her saviour, will receive him fittingly.

Lur. Ah Braccio, you know Florence ! Will she, think
you,

Receive one . . . what means "fittingly receive" ?

—Receive compatriots, doubtless—I am none :

And yet Domizia promises so much !

Brac. Kind women still give men a woman's prize.

I know not o'er which gate most boughs will arch,

Nor if the Square will wave red flags or blue.

I should have judged, the fullest of rewards

Our state gave Luria, when she made him chief

Of her whole force, in her best captain's place.

Lur. That, my reward ? Florence on my account

Relieved Ser Puccio ?—mark you, my reward !

And Puccio's having all the fight's true joy—

Goes here and there, gets close, may fight, himself,

While I must order, stand aloof, o'ersee.

That was my calling, there was my true place !

I should have felt, in some one over me,
Florence impersonate, my visible head,
As I am over Puccio,—taking life
Directly from her eye ! They give me you :
But do you cross me, set me half to work ?
I enjoy nothing—though I will, for once !
Decide, shall we join battle ? may I wait ?

Brac. Let us compound the matter ; wait till noon :
Then, no arrival,—

Lur. Ah, noon comes too fast !
I wonder, do you guess why I delay
Involuntarily the final blow
As long as possible ? Peace follows it !
Florence at peace, and the calm studious heads
Come out again, the penetrating eyes ;
As if a spell broke, all resumed, each art
You boast, more vivid that it slept awhile.
Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white palace-front
The interrupted scaffold climbs anew ;
The walls are peopled by the painter's brush ;
The statue to its niche ascends to dwell.
The present noise and trouble have retired
And left the eternal past to rule once more ;—
You speak its speech and read its records plain,
Greece lives with you, each Roman breathes your friend :
But Luria—where will then be Luria's place ?

Dom. Highest in honour, for that past's own sake,
Of which his actions, sealing up the sum
By saving all that went before from wreck,

Will range as part, with which be worshipped too.

Lur. Then I may walk and watch you in your streets,
Lead the smooth life my rough life helps no more,
So different, so new, so beautiful—

Nor fear that you will tire to see parade
The club that slew the lion, now that crooks
And shepherd-pipes come into use again?
For very lone and silent seems my East
In its drear vastness : still it spreads, and still
No Braccios, no Domizias anywhere—
Not ever more !—Well, well, to-day is ours !

Dom. [*to BRAC.*] Should he not have been one of us?

Lur. Oh, no !

Not one of you, and so escape the thrill
Of coming into you, of changing thus,—
Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts
The boundless unrest of the savage heart !
The sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the land,
Breaks there and buries its tumultuous strength ;
Horror, and silence, and a pause awhile :
Lo, inland glides the gulf-stream, miles away,
In rapture of assent, subdued and still,
'Neath those strange banks, those unimagined skies.
Well, 't is not sure the quiet lasts for ever !
Your placid heads still find rough hands new work ;
Some minutes' chance—there comes the need of mine :
And, all resolved on, I too hear at last.
Oh, you must find some use for me, Ser Braccio !
You hold my strength ; 't were best dispose of it :

What you created, see that you find food for—
I shall be dangerous else !

Brac. How dangerous, sir ?

Lur. There are so many ways, Domizia warns me,
And one with half the power that I possess,
Grows very formidable ! Do you doubt ?
Why, first, who holds the army . . .

Dom. While we talk,
Morn wears ; we keep you from your proper place,
The field.

Lur. Nay, to the field I move no more ;
My part is done, and Puccio's may begin :
I cannot trench upon his province longer
With any face.—You think yourselves so safe ?
Why see—in concert with Tiburzio, now—
One could . . .

Dom. A trumpet !

Lur. My Lucchese at last !
Arrived, as sure as Florence stands ! Your leave !

[*Springs out.*]

Dom. How plainly is true greatness charactered
By such unconscious sport as Luria's here,
Strength sharing least the secret of itself !
Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,
Such save the world which none but they could save,
Yet think whate'er they did, that world could do.

Brac. Yes : and how worthy note, that these same
great ones
In hand or head, with such unconsciousness

And all its due entailed humility,
Should never shrink, so far as I perceive,
From taking up whatever tool there be
Effects the whole world's safety or mishap,
Into their mild hands as a thing of course !
The statist finds it natural to lead
The mob who might as easily lead him—
The captain marshals troops born skilled in war—
Statist and captain verily believe !
While we poor scribes . . . you catch me thinking now,
That I shall in this very letter write
What none of you are able ! To it, Lapo !

[DOMIZIA goes.

This last, worst, all-affected childish fit
Of Luria's, this be-praised unconsciousness,
Convinces me ; the past was no child's play :
It was a man beat Pisa,—not a child.
All 's mere dissimulation—to remove
The fear, he best knows we should entertain.
The utmost danger was at hand. Is 't written?
Now make a duplicate, lest this should fail,
And speak your fullest on the other side.

Sec. I noticed he was busily repairing
My half-effacement of his Duomo sketch,
And, while he spoke of Florence, turned to it,
As the Mage Negro king to Christ the babe —
I judge his childishness the mere relapse
To boyhood of a man who has worked lately,
And presently will work, so, meantime, plays :

Whence, more than ever I believe in him.

Brac. [*after a pause.*] The sword! At best, the
soldier, as he says,

In Florence—the black face, the barbarous name,

For Italy to boast her show of the age,

Her man of men!—To Florence with each letter!

ACT II.

NOON.

Dom. Well, Florence, shall I reach thee, pierce thy
heart

Thro' all its safeguards? Hate is said to help—

Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm;

And this my hate, made up of many hates,

Might stand in scorn of visible instrument,

And will thee dead: yet do I trust it not.

Nor man's devices nor Heaven's memory

Of wickedness forgot on earth so soon,

But thy own nature,—hell and thee I trust,

To keep thee constant in that wickedness,

Where my revenge may meet thee. Turn aside

A single step, for gratitude or shame,—

Grace but this Luria,—this wild mass of rage

I have prepared to launch against thee now,—

With other payment than thy noblest found,—

Give his desert for once its due reward,—
And past thee would my sure destruction roll.
But thou, who mad'st our House thy sacrifice,
It cannot be thou wilt except this Moor
From the accustomed fate of zeal and truth :
Thou wilt deny his looked-for recompense,
And then—I reach thee. Old and trained, my sire
Could bow down on his quiet broken heart,
Die awe-struck and submissive, when at last
The strange blow came for the expected wreath ;
And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment
To exile, never to return,—they say,
Perplexed in his frank simple honest soul,
As if some natural law had changed,—how else
Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing thus,
Judge Porzio's actions worthy such reward ?
But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,
—Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on hour,
In which no way of getting his fair fame
From their inexplicable charges free,
Was found, save pouring forth the impatient blood
To show its colour whether false or no !
My brothers never had a friend like me
Close in their need to watch the time, then speak,
—Burst with a wakening laughter on their dream,
Cry, “ Florence was all falseness, so, false here ! ”
And show them what a simple task remained—
To leave dreams, rise, and punish in God's name
The city wedded to the wickedness.

None stood by them as I by Luria stand.
 So, when the stranger cheated of his due
 Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids,
 Then, Florence, think, a hireling at thy throat
 For the first outrage, think who bore thy last,
 Yet mutely in forlorn obedience died !
 He comes—his friend—black faces in the camp
 Where moved those peerless brows and eyes of old

Enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Dom. Well, and the movement—is it as you hope ?
 'T is Lucca ?

Lur. Ah, the Pisan trumpet merely !
 Tiburzio's envoy, I must needs receive.

Dom. Whom I withdraw before ; tho' if I lingered
 You could not wonder, for my time fleets fast.
 The overtaking night brings such reward !
 And where will then be room for me ? Yet, praised,
 Remember who was first to promise praise,
 And envy those who also can perform ! [*Goes.*

Lur. This trumpet from the Pisans ?—

Hus. In the camp ;
 A very noble presence—Braccio's visage
 On Puccio's body—calm and fixed and good ;
 A man I seem as I had seen before :
 Most like, it was some statue had the face.

Lur. Admit him ! This will prove the last delay.

Hus. Ay, friend, go on, and die thou going on !
 Thou heardst what the grave woman said but now :
 To-night rewards thee. That is well to hear ;

But stop not therefore : hear it, and go on !

Lur. Oh, their reward and triumph and the rest
 They round me in the ears with, all day long ?
 All that, I never take for earnest, friend !
 Well would it suit us,—their triumphal arch
 Or storied pillar,—thee and me, the Moors !
 But gratitude in those Italian eyes—
 That, we shall get ?

Hus. It is too cold an air.
 Our sun rose out of yonder mound of mist :
 Where is he now ? So, I trust none of them.

Lur. Truly ?

Hus. I doubt and fear. There stands a wall
 'Twixt our expansive and explosive race
 And those absorbing, concentrating men.
 They use thee.

Lur. And I feel it, Husain ! yes,
 And care not—yes, an alien force like mine
 Is only called to play its part outside
 Their different nature ; where its sole use seems
 To fight with and keep off an adverse force,
 As alien,—which repelled, mine too withdraws :
 Inside, they know not what to do with me.
 Thus I have told them laughingly and oft,
 But long since am prepared to learn the worst.

Hus. What is the worst ?

Lur. I will forestall them, Husain,
 Will speak the destiny they dare not speak—
 Banish myself before they find the heart.

I will be first to say, "The work rewards !
 " I know, for all your praise, my use is over,
 " So may it prove !—meanwhile 't is best I go,
 " Go carry safe my memories of you all
 " To other scenes of action, newer lands."—
 Thus leaving them confirmed in their belief
 They would not easily have tired of me.
 You think this hard to say ?

Hus.

Say or not say,

So thou but go, so they but let thee go !
 This hating people, that hate each the other,
 And in one blandness to us Moors unite—
 Locked each to each like slippery snakes, I say,
 Which still in all their tangles, hissing tongue
 And threatening tail, ne'er do each other harm ;
 While any creature of a better blood,
 They seem to fight for, while they circle safe
 And never touch it,—pines without a wound,
 Withers away beside their eyes and breath.
 See thou, if Puccio come not safely out
 Of Braccio's grasp, this Braccio sworn his foe,
 As Braccio safely from Domizia's toils
 Who hates him most ! But thou, the friend of all,
 . . Come out of them !

Lur.

The Pisan trumpet now !

Hus. Breathe free—it is an enemy, no friend ! [*Goes.*

Lur. He keeps his instincts, no new culture mars
 Their perfect use in him ; just so the brutes
 Rest not, are anxious without visible cause,

When change is in the elements at work,
 Which man's trained senses fail to apprehend.
 But here,—he takes the distant chariot-wheel
 For thunder, festal flame for lightning's flash,
 The finer traits of cultivated life
 For treachery and malevolence : I see !

Enter TIBURZIO.

Lur. Quick, sir, your message ! I but wait your
 message

To sound the charge. You bring no overture
 For truce ?—I would not, for your General's sake,
 You spoke of truce : a time to fight is come,
 And, whatsoe'er the fight's event, he keeps
 His honest soldier's-name to beat me with,
 Or leaves me all himself to beat, I trust !

Tib. I am Tiburzio.

Lur. You ? 'T is—yes . . Tiburzio !

You were the last to keep the ford i' the valley
 From Puccio, when I threw in succours there !
 Why, I was on the heights—through the defile
 Ten minutes after, when the prey was lost !
 You wore an open skull-cap with a twist
 Of water-reeds—the plume being hewn away ;
 While I drove down my battle from the heights,
 I saw with my own eyes !

Tib. And you are Luria

Who sent my cohort, that laid down its arms
 In error of the battle-signal's sense,
 Back safely to me at the critical time—

One of a hundred deeds. I know you! Therefore
To none but you could I . . .

Lur.

No truce, Tiburzio!

Tib. Luria, you know the peril imminent
On Pisa,—that you have us in the toils,
Us her last safeguard, all that intercepts
The rage of her implacablest of foes
From Pisa,—if we fall to-day, she falls.
Tho' Lucca will arrive, yet, 't is too late.
You have so plainly here the best of it,
That you must feel, brave soldier as you are,
How dangerous we grow in this extreme,
How truly formidable by despair.
Still, probabilities should have their weight:
The extreme chance is ours, but, that chance failing,
You win this battle. Wherefore say I this?
To be well apprehended when I add,
This danger absolutely comes from you.
Were you, who threaten thus, a Florentine . . .

Lur. Sir, I am nearer Florence than her sons.
I can, and have perhaps obliged the State,
Nor paid a mere son's duty.

Tib.

Even so.

Were you the son of Florence, yet endued
With all your present nobleness of soul,
No question, what I must communicate
Would not detach you from her.

Lur.

Me, detach?

Tib. Time urges. You will ruin presently

Pisa, you never knew, for Florence' sake
You think you know. I have from time to time
Made prize of certain secret missives sent
From Braccio here, the Commissary, home :
And knowing Florence otherwise, I piece
The entire chain out, from these its scattered links.
Your trial occupies the Signory ;
They sit in judgment on your conduct now.
When men at home inquire into the acts
Which in the field e'en foes appreciate . . .
Brief, they are Florentines ! You, saving them,
Seek but the sure destruction saviours find.

Lur. Tiburzio !

Tib. All the wonder is of course.

I am not here to teach you, nor direct,
Only to loyally apprise—scarce that.
This is the latest letter, sealed and safe,
As it left here an hour ago. One way
Of two thought free to Florence, I command.
The duplicate is on its road ; but this,—
Read it, and then I shall have more to say.

Lur. Florence !

Tib. Now, were yourself a Florentine,
This letter, let it hold the worst it can,
Would be no reason you should fall away.
The mother city is the mother still,
And recognition of the children's service,
Her own affair ; reward—there 's no reward !
But you are bound by quite another tie.

Nor nature shows, nor reason, why at first
A foreigner, born friend to all alike,
Should give himself to any special State
More than another, stand by Florence' side
Rather than Pisa ; 't is as fair a city
You war against, as that you fight for—famed
As well as she in story, graced no less
With noble heads and patriotic hearts :
Nor to a stranger's eye would either cause,
Stripped of the cumulative loves and hates
Which take importance from familiar view,
Stand as the right and sole to be upheld.
Therefore, should the preponderating gift
Of love and trust, Florence was first to throw,
Which made you hers, not Pisa's, void the scale.—
Old ties dissolving, things resume their place
And all begins again. Break seal and read !
At least let Pisa offer for you now !
And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice—
'Though for myself I lose, in gaining you,
This last fight and its opportunity ;
• The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
Or in the turn of battle dying so
That shame should want its extreme bitterness.

Lur. Tiburzio, you that fight for Pisa now
As I for Florence . . say my chance were yours !
You read this letter, and you find . . no, no !
Too mad !

Tib. I read the letter, find they purpose

When I have crushed their foe, to crush me : well ?

Lur. You, being their captain, what is it you do ?

Tib. Why as it is, all cities are alike ;

As Florence pays you, Pisa will pay me.

I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,

As you, or more : my weak head, they will say,

Prompted this last expedient, my faint heart

Entailed on them indelible disgrace,

Both which defects ask proper punishment.

Another tenure of obedience, mine !

You are no son of Pisa's : break and read !

Lur. And act on what I read ? What act were fit ?

If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith

In Florence, who to me stands for mankind,

—If that break up and, disimprisoning

From the abyss . . . Ah friend, it cannot be !

You may be very sage, yet—all the world

Having to fail, or your sagacity,

You do not wish to find yourself alone !

What would the world be worth ? Whose love be sure ?

The world remains : you are deceived !

Tib.

Your hand !

I lead the vanguard.—If you fall, beside,

The better : I am left to speak ! For me,

This was my duty, nor would I rejoice

If I could help, it misses its effect ;

And after all you will look gallantly

Found dead here with that letter in your breast.

Lur. Tiburzio—I would see these people once

And test them ere I answer finally !
At your arrival let the trumpet sound :
If mine return not then the wonted cry
It means that I believe—am Pisa's !

Tib.

Well ! [*Goes.*

Lur. My heart will have it he speaks true ! My blood
Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend.
If he had stept into my watch-tent, night
And the wild desert full of foes around,
I should have broke the bread and given the salt
Secure, and, when my hour of watch was done,
Taken my turn to sleep between his knees,
Safe in the untroubled brow and honest cheek.
Oh world, where all things pass and nought abides,
Oh life, the long mutation—is it so ?
Is it with life as with the body's change ?
—Where, e'en tho' better follow, good must pass,
Nor manhood's strength can mate with boyhood's grace,
Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find strength,
But silently the first gift dies away,
And though the new stays, never both at once.
Life's time of savage instinct o'er with me,
It fades and dies away, past trusting more,
As if to punish the ingratitude
With which I turned to grow in these new lights,
And learned to look with European eyes.
Yet it is better, this cold certain way,
Where Braccio's brow tells nothing, Puccio's mouth,
Domizia's eyes reject the searcher : yes !

For on their calm sagacity I lean,
Their sense of right, deliberate choice of good,
Sure, as they know my deeds, they deal with me.
Yes, that is better—that is best of all !
Such faith stays when mere wild belief would go.
Yes—when the desert creature's heart, at fault
Amid the scattering tempest's pillared sands,
Betrays its step into the pathless drift—
The calm instructed eye of man holds fast
By the sole bearing of the visible star,
Sure that when slow the whirling wreck subside,
The boundaries, lost now, shall be found again,—
The palm-trees and the pyramid over all.
Yes : I trust Florence : Pisa is deceived.

Enter BRACCIO, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Brac. Noon 's at an end : no Lucca ? You must fight.

Lur. Do you remember ever, gentle friends,
I am no Florentine ?

Dom. It is yourself
Who still are forcing us, importunately,
To bear in mind what else we should forget.

Lur. For loss !—for what I lose in being none !
No shrewd man, such as you yourselves respect,
But would remind you of the stranger's loss
In natural friends and advocates at home,
Hereditary loves, even rivalships
With precedent for honour and reward.
Still, there 's a gain, too ! If you take it so,
The stranger's lot has special gain as well.

Do you forget there was my own far East
 I might have given away myself to, once,
 As now to Florence, and for such a gift,
 Stood there like a descended deity?
 There, worship waits us : what is it waits here ?

[Shows the letter.

See ! Chance has put into my hand the means
 Of knowing what I earn, before I work.
 Should I fight better, should I fight the worse,
 With payment palpably before me ? See !
 Here lies my whole reward ! Best learn it now
 Or keep it for the end's entire delight ?

Brac. If you serve Florence as the vulgar serve,
 For swordsman's-pay alone,—break seal and read !
 In that case, you will find your full desert.

Lur. Give me my one last happy moment, friends !
 You need me now, and all the graciousness
 This letter can contain will hardly balance
 The after feeling that you need no more.
 This moment . . oh, the East has use with you !
 Its sword still flashes—is not flung aside
 With the past praise, in a dark corner yet !
 How say you ? 'T is not so with Florentines—
 Captains of yours—for them, the ended war
 Is but a first step to the peace begun :
 He who did well in war, just earns the right
 To begin doing well in peace, you know :
 And certain my precursors,—would not such
 Look to themselves in such a chance as mine,

Secure the ground they trod upon, perhaps?
 For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to hear,
 Of strange mishap, mistake, ingratitude,
 Treachery even. Say that one of you
 Surmised this letter carried what might turn
 To harm hereafter, cause him prejudice:
 What would he do?

Dom. [*hastily.*] Thank God and take revenge!
 Hurl her own force against the city straight!
 And, even at the moment when the foe
 Sounded defiance . . .

[TIBURZIO's trumpet sounds in the distance.]

Lur. Ah, you Florentines!
 So would you do? Wisely for you, no doubt!
 My simple Moorish instinct bids me clench
 The obligation you relieve me from,
 Still deeper! [*To Puc.*] Sound our answer, I should say,
 And thus:—[*tearing the paper.*]—The battle! That
 solves every doubt.

ACT III.

AFTERNOON.

PUCCIO, *as making a report to* JACOPO.

Puc. And here, your captain must report the rest;
 For, as I say, the main engagement over
 And Luria's special part in it performed,

How could subaltern like myself expect
 Leisure or leave to occupy the field
 And glean what dropped from his wide harvesting ?
 I thought, when Lucca at the battle's end
 Came up, just as the Pisan centre broke,
 That Luria would detach me and prevent
 The flying Pisans seeking what they found,
 Friends in the rear, a point to rally by.
 But no, more honourable proved my post !
 I had the august captive to escort
 Safe to our camp ; some other could pursue,
 Fight, and be famous ; gentler chance was mine—
 Tiburzio's wounded spirit must be soothed !
 He 's in the tent there.

Jac.

Is the substance down ?

I write—"The vanguard beaten and both wings
 "In full retreat, Tiburzio prisoner"—
 And now,—“That they fell back and formed again
 “On Lucca's coming.” Why then, after all,
 'T is half a victory, no conclusive one ?

Puc. Two operations where a sole had served.

Jac. And Luria's fault was—?

Puc.

Oh, for fault—not much !

He led the attack, a thought impetuously,
 —There 's commonly more prudence ; now, he seemed
 To hurry measures, otherwise well judged.
 By over-concentrating strength at first
 Against the enemy's van, both wings escaped :
 That 's reparable, yet it is a fault.

Enter BRACCIO.

Jac. As good as a full victory to Florence,
With the advantage of a fault beside—
What is it, Puccio?—that by pressing forward
With too impetuous . . .

Brac. The report anon !
Thanks, sir—you have elsewhere a charge, I know.

[PUCCIO goes.]

There 's nothing done but I would do again ;
Yet, Lapo, it may be the past proves nothing,
And Luria has kept faithful to the close.

Jac. I was for waiting.

Brac. Yes : so was not I.
He could not choose but tear that letter—true !
Still, certain of his tones, I mind, and looks :—
You saw, too, with a fresher soul than I.
So, Porzio seemed an injured man, they say !
Well, I have gone upon the broad, sure ground.

Enter LURIA, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Lur. [to PUC.] Say, at his pleasure I will see
Tiburzio !

All 's at his pleasure.

Dom. [to LUR.] Were I not forewarned
You would reject, as you do constantly,
Praise,—I might tell you how you have deserved
Of Florence by this last and crowning feat :
But words offend.

Lur. Nay, you may praise me now.
I want instruction every hour, I find,

On points where once I saw least need of it ;
 And praise, I have been used to slight perhaps,
 Seems scarce so easily dispensed with now.
 After a battle half one's strength is gone ;
 The glorious passion in us once appeased,
 Our reason's calm cold dreadful voice begins.
 All justice, power and beauty scarce appear
 Monopolized by Florence, as of late,
 To me, the stranger : you, no doubt, may know
 Why Pisa needs must bear her rival's yoke.
 And peradventure I grow nearer you,
 For I, too, want to know and be assured.
 When a cause ceases to reward itself,
 Its friend seeks fresh sustainments ; praise is one,
 And here stand you—you, lady, praise me well.
 But yours—(your pardon)—is unlearned praise.
 To the motive, the endeavour, the heart's self,
 Your quick sense looks : you crown and call aright
 The soul o' the purpose, ere 't is shaped as act,
 Takes flesh i' the world, and clothes itself a king.
 But when the act comes, stands for what 't is worth,
 —Here 's Puccio, the skilled soldier, he 's my judge !
 Was all well, Puccio ?

Puc.

All was . . . must be well :

If we beat Lucca presently, as doubtless . . .

—No, there 's no doubt, we must—all was well done.

Lur. In truth ? Still, you are of the trade, my
 Puccio !

You have the fellow-craftsman's sympathy.

There 's none cares, like a fellow of the craft,
For the all-unestimated sum of pains
That go to a success the world can see :
They praise then, but the best they never know
—While you know ! So, if envy mix with it,
Hate even, still the bottom-praise of all,
Whatever be the dregs, that drop 's pure gold !
—For nothing 's like it ; nothing else records
Those daily, nightly drippings in the dark
Of the heart's blood, the world lets drop away
For ever—so, pure gold that praise must be !
And I have yours, my soldier ! yet the best
Is still to come. There 's one looks on apart
Whom all refers to, failure or success ;
What 's done might be our best, our utmost work,
And yet inadequate to serve his need.
Here 's Braccio now, for Florence—here 's our service—
Well done for us, seems it well done for him ?
His chosen engine, tasked to its full strength
Answers the end ? Should he have chosen higher ?
Do we help Florence, now our best is wrought ?

Brac. This battle, with the foregone services,
Saves Florence.

Lur. Why then, all is very well !
Here am I in the middle of my friends,
Who know me and who love me, one and all !
And yet . . 't is like . . this instant while I speak
Is like the turning-moment of a dream
When . . . Ah, you are not foreigners like me !

Well then, one always dreams of friends at home ;
And always comes, I say, the turning-point
When something changes in the friendly eyes
That love and look on you . . so slight, so slight . .
And yet it tells you they are dead and gone,
Or changed and enemies, for all their words,
And all is mockery and a maddening show.
You now, so kind here, all you Florentines,
What is it in your eyes . . those lips, those brows . .
Nobody spoke it, yet I know it well !—
Come now—this battle saves you, all 's at end,
Your use of me is o'er, for good, for ill,—
Come now, what 's done against me, while I speak,
In Florence ? Come ! I feel it in my blood,
My eyes, my hair, a voice is in my ears
That spite of all this smiling and soft speech
You are betraying me ! What is it you do ?
Have it your way, and think my use is over—
Think you are saved and may throw off the mask—
Have it my way, and think more work remains
Which I could do,—so, show you fear me not !
Or prudent be, or daring, as you choose,
But tell me—tell what I refused to know
At noon, lest heart should fail me ! Well ? That letter ?
My fate is sealed at Florence ! What is it ?

Brac. Sir, I shall not deny what you divine.
It is no novelty for innocence
To be suspected, but a privilege :
The after certain compensation comes.

Charges, I say not whether false or true,
Have been preferred against you some time since,
Which Florence was bound, plainly, to receive,
And which are therefore undergoing now
The due investigation. That is all.
I doubt not but your innocence will prove
Apparent and illustrious, as to me,
To them this evening, when the trial ends.

Lur. My trial?

Dom. Florence, Florence to the end,
My whole heart thanks thee!

Puc. [*to BRAC.*] What is "trial," sir?
It was not for a trial—surely, no—
I furnished you those notes from time to time?
I held myself aggrieved—I am a man—
And I might speak,—ay, and speak mere truth, too,
And yet not mean at bottom of my heart
What should assist a—trial, do you say?
You should have told me!

Dom. Nay, go on, go on!
His sentence! Do they sentence him? What is it?
The block—wheel?

Brac. Sentence there is none as yet,
Nor shall I give my own opinion now
Of what it should be, or is like to be.
When it is passed, applaud or disapprove!
Up to that point, what is there to impugn?

Lur. They are right, then, to try me?

Brac. I assert,

Maintain and justify the absolute right
Of Florence to do all she can have done
In this procedure,—standing on her guard,
Receiving even services like yours
With utmost fit suspicious wariness.
In other matters, keep the mummery up !
Take all the experiences of all the world,
Each knowledge that broke through a heart to life,
Each reasoning which, to reach, burnt out a brain,
—In other cases, know these, warrant these,
And then dispense with these—'t is very well !
Let friend trust friend, and love demand love's like,
And gratitude be claimed for benefits,—
There's grace in that,—and when the fresh heart breaks,
The new brain proves a ruin, what of them ?
Where is the matter of one moth the more
Singed in the candle, at a summer's end ?
But Florence is no simple John or James
To have his toy, his fancy, his conceit
That he's the one excepted man by fate,
And, when fate shows him he's mistaken there,
Die with all good men's praise, and yield his place
To Paul and George intent to try their chance !
Florence exists because these pass away.
She's a contrivance to supply a type
Of man, which men's deficiencies refuse,
She binds so many, that she grows out of them—
Stands steady o'er their numbers, though they change
And pass away—there's always what upholds,

Always enough to fashion the great show.
As see, yon hanging city, in the sun,
Of shapely cloud substantially the same !
A thousand vapours rise and sink again,
Are interfused, and live their life and die,—
Yet ever hangs the steady show i' the air,
Under the sun's straight influence : that is well,
That is worth heaven should hold, and God should bless
And so is Florence,—the unseen sun above,
Which draws and holds suspended all of us,
Binds transient vapours into a single cloud
Differing from each and better than they all.
And shall she dare to stake this permanence
On any one man's faith ? Man's heart is weak,
And its temptations many : let her prove
Each servant to the very uttermost
Before she grant him her reward, I say !

Dom. And as for hearts she chances to mistake,
Wronged hearts, not destined to receive reward,
Though they deserve it, did she only know !
—What should she do for these?

Brac. What does she not?

Say, that she gives them but herself to serve !
Here's Luria—what had profited his strength,
When half an hour of sober fancying
Had shown him step by step the uselessness
Of strength exerted for strength's proper sake ?
But the truth is, she did create that strength,
Draw to the end the corresponding means.

The world is wide— are we the only men ?
Oh, for the time, the social purpose' sake,
Use words agreed on, bandy epithets,
Call any man the sole great wise and good !
But shall we therefore, standing by ourselves,
Insult our souls and God with the same speech ?
There, swarm the ignoble thousands under him :
What marks us from the hundreds and the tens ?
Florence took up, turned all one way the soul
Of Luria with its fires, and here he glows !
She takes me out of all the world as him,
Fixing my coldness till like ice it checks
The fire ! So, Braccio, Luria, which is best ?

Lur. Ah, brave me ? And is this indeed the way
To gain your good word and sincere esteem ?
Am I the baited animal that must turn
And fight his baiters to deserve their praise ?
Obedience is mistake then ? Be it so !
Do you indeed remember I stand here
The captain of the conquering army,—mine—
With all your tokens, praise and promise, ready
To show for what their names meant when you gave,
Not what you style them now you take away ?
If I call in my troops to arbitrate,
And dash the first enthusiastic thrill
Of victory with this you menace now—
Commend to the instinctive popular sense,
My story first, your comment afterward,—
Will they take, think you, part with you or me ?

If I say—I, the labourer they saw work,
Ending my work, ask pay, and find my lords
Have all this while provided silently
Against the day of pay and proving faith,
By what you call my sentence that's to come—
Will friends advise I wait complacently?
If I meet Florence half way at their head,
What will you do, my mild antagonist?

Brac. I will rise up like fire, proud and triumphant
That Florence knew you thoroughly and by me,
And so was saved. “See, Italy,” I'll say,
“The crown of our precautions! Here's a man
“Was far advanced, just touched on the belief
“Less subtle cities had accorded long;
“But we were wiser: at the end comes this!”
And from that minute, where is Luria? Lost!
The very stones of Florence cry against
The all-exacting, nought-enduring fool,
Who thus resents her first probation, flouts
As if he, only, shone and cast no shade,
He, only, walked the earth with privilege
Against suspicion, free where angels fear:
He, for the first inquisitive mother's-word,
Must turn, and stand on his defence, forsooth!
Reward? You will not be worth punishment!

Lur. And Florence knew me thus! Thus I have
lived,—

And thus you, with the clear fine intellect,
Braccio, the cold acute instructed mind,

Out of the stir, so calm and unconfused,
Reported me—how could you otherwise !
Ay?—and what dropped from you, just now, moreover ?
Your information, Puccio?—Did your skill,
Your understanding sympathy approve
Such a report of me ? Was this the end ?
Or is even this the end ? Can I stop here ?
You, lady, with the woman's stand apart,
The heart to see with, past man's brain and eyes,
. . . I cannot fathom why you should destroy
The unoffending one, you call your friend—
Still, lessoned by the good examples here
Of friendship, 't is but natural I ask—
Had you a further aim, in aught you urged,
Than your friend's profit—in all those instances
Of perfidy, all Florence wrought of wrong—
All I remember now for the first time ?

Dom. I am a daughter of the Traversari,
Sister of Porzio and of Berto both,
So, have foreseen all that has come to pass.
I knew the Florence that could doubt their faith,
Must needs mistrust a stranger's—dealing them
Punishment, would deny him his reward.
And I believed, the shame they bore and died,
He would not bear, but live and fight against—
Seeing he was of other stuff than they.

Lur. Hear them ! All these against one foreigner !
And all this while, where is in the whole world
To his good faith a single witness ?

Tiburzio. [who has entered unseen during the preceding dialogue.] Here !

Thus I bear witness, not in word but deed.
I live for Pisa ; she 's not lost to-day
By many chances—much prevents from that !
Her army has been beaten, I am here,
But Lucca comes at last, one happy chance !
I rather would see Pisa three times lost
Than saved by any traitor, even by you ;
The example of a traitor's happy fortune
Would bring more evil in the end than good ;—
Pisa rejects the traitor, craves yourself !
I, in her name, resign forthwith to you
My charge,—the highest office, sword and shield !
You shall not, by my counsel, turn on Florence
Your army, give her calumny that ground—
Nor bring one soldier : be you all we gain !
And all she 'll lose,—a head to deck some bridge,
And save the cost o' the crown should deck the head.
Leave her to perish in her perfidy,
Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all eyes,
A proverb and a bye-word in all mouths !
Go you to Pisa ! Florence is my place—
Leave me to tell her of the rectitude,
I, from the first, told Pisa, knowing it.
To Pisa !

Dom. Ah my Braccio, are you caught ?

Brac. Puccio, good soldier and good citizen
Whom I have ever kept beneath my eye,

Ready as fit, to serve in this event
 Florence, who clear foretold it from the first—
 Through me, she gives you the command and charge
 She takes, through me, from him who held it late !
 A painful trial, very sore, was yours :
 All that could draw out, marshal in array
 The selfish passions 'gainst the public good—
 Sights, scorns, neglects, were heaped on you to bear :
 And ever you did bear and bow the head !
 It had been sorry trial, to precede
 Your feet, hold up the promise of reward
 For luring gleam ; your footsteps kept the track
 Thro' dark and doubt : take all the light at once !
 Trial is over, consummation shines ;
 Well have you served, as well henceforth command !

Puc. No, no . . I dare not ! I am grateful, glad ;
 But Luria—you shall understand he's wronged—
 And he's my captain—this is not the way
 We soldiers climb to fortune : think again !
 The sentence is not even passed, beside !
 I dare not . . where's the soldier could ?

Lur. Now, Florence—
 Is it to be ?—You will know all the strength
 O' the savage—to your neck the proof must go ?
 You will prove the brute nature ? Ah, I see !
 The savage plainly is impassible—
 He keeps his calm way through insulting words,
 Sarcastic looks, sharp gestures—one of which
 Would stop you, fatal to your finer sense,

But if he stolidly advance, march mute
Without a mark upon his callous hide,
Through the mere brushwood you grow angry with,
And leave the tatters of your flesh upon,
—You have to learn that when the true bar comes,
The murk mid-forest, the grand obstacle,
Which when you reach, you give the labour up,
Nor dash on, but lie down composed before,
—He goes against it, like the brute he is :
It falls before him, or he dies in his course.
I kept my course through past ingratitude :
I saw—it does seem, now, as if I saw,
Could not but see, those insults as they fell,
—Ay, let them glance from off me, very like,
Laughing, perhaps, to think the quality
You grew so bold on, while you so despised
The Moor's dull mute inapprehensive mood,
Was saving you : I bore and kept my course.
Now real wrong fronts me : see if I succumb !
Florence withstands me ?—I will punish her.

At night my sentence will arrive, you say.
Till then I cannot, if I would, rebel
—Unauthorized to lay my office down,
Retaining my full power to will and do :
After—it is to see. Tiburzio, thanks !
Go ; you are free : join Lucca ! I suspend
All further operations till to-night.
Thank you, and for the silence most of all !

[76 BRAC.] Let my complacent bland accuser go
Carry his self-approving head and heart
Safe through the army which would trample him
Dead in a moment at my word or sign !
Go, sir, to Florence ; tell friends what I say—
That while I wait my sentence, theirs waits them !
[76 DOM.] You, lady,—you have black Italian eyes !
I would be generous if I might . . oh, yes—
For I remember how so oft you seemed
Inclined at heart to break the barrier down
Which Florence finds God built between us both.
Alas, for generosity ! this hour
Asks retribution : bear it as you may,
I must—the Moor—the savage,—pardon you !
Puccio, my trusty soldier, see them forth !

ACT IV.

EVENING.

Enter PUCCIO and JACOPO.

Puc. What Luria will do ? Ah, 't is yours, fair sir,
You and your subtle-witted master's part,
To tell me that ; I tell you what he can.

Jac. Friend, you mistake my station : I observe
The game, watch how my betters play, no more.

Puc. But mankind are not pieces—there 's your fault !
You cannot push them, and, the first move made,

Lean back and study what the next shall be,
 In confidence that, when 't is fixed upon,
 You find just where you left them, blacks and whites :
 Men go on moving when your hand 's away.
 You build, I notice, firm on Luria's faith
 This whole time,—firmlier than I choose to build,
 Who never doubted it—of old, that is—
 With Luria in his ordinary mind.
 But now, oppression makes the wise man mad :
 How do I know he will not turn and stand
 And hold his own against you, as he may ?
 Suppose he be : withdraw to Pisa—well,—
 Then, even . . . all happen to your wish,
 Which is a chance . . .

Jac. Nay—'t was an oversight,
 Not waiting till the proper warrant came :
 You could not take what was not ours to give.
 But when at night the sentence really comes,
 Our city authorizes past dispute
 Luria's removal and transfers the charge,
 You will perceive your duty and accept ?

Puc. Accept what ? muster-rolls of soldiers' names ?
 An army upon paper ?—I want men,
 The hearts as well as hands—and where 's a heart
 But beats with Luria, in the multitude
 I come from walking through by Luria's side ?
 You gave them Luria, set him thus to grow,
 Head-like, upon their trunk ; one heart feeds both,
 They feel him there, live twice, and well know why.

—For they do know, if you are ignorant,
Who kept his own place and respected theirs,
Managed their sweat, yet never spared his blood.
All was your act : another might have served—
There 's peradventure no such dearth of heads—
But you chose Luria—so, they grew one flesh,
And now, for nothing they can understand,
Luria removed, off is to roll the head ;
The body 's mine—much I shall do with it !

Jac. That 's at the worst.

Puc.

No—at the best, it is !

Best, do you hear? I saw them by his side.
Only we two with Luria in the camp
Are left that keep the secret? You think that?
Hear what I know : from rear to van, no heart
But felt the quiet patient hero there
Was wronged, nor in the moveless ranks an eye
But glancing told its fellow the whole story
Of that convicted silent knot of spies
Who passed thro' them to Florence ; they might pass—
No breast but gladlier beat when free of such !
Our troops will catch up Luria, close him round,
Bear him to Florence as their natural lord,
Partake his fortune, live or die with him.

Jac. And by mistake catch up along with him
Puccio, no doubt, compelled in self despite
To still continue second in command !

Puc. No, sir, no second nor so fortunate !
Your tricks succeed with me too well for that !

am as you have made me, live and die
to serve your end ! a mere trained fighting-hack
With words, you laugh at while they leave your mouth,
for my life's rule and ordinance of God !
I have to do my duty, keep my faith,
and earn my praise, and guard against my blame,
as I was trained. I shall accept your charge,
and fight against one better than myself,
in spite of my heart's conviction of his worth.
That, you may count on !—just as hitherto
I have gone on, persuaded I was wronged,
slighted, insulted, terms we learn by rote,—
All because Luria superseded me—
Because the better nature, fresh-inspired,
Mounted above me to its proper place !
What mattered all the kindly graciousness,
The cordial brother's-bearing ? This was clear—
I, once the captain, was subaltern now,
And so must keep complaining like a fool !
Go, take the curse of a lost soul, I say !
You neither play your puppets to the end,
Nor treat the real man,—for his realness' sake
Thrust rudely in their place,—with such regard
As might console them for their altered rank.
Me, the mere steady soldier, you depose
For Luria, and here 's all your pet deserves !
Of what account, then, is your laughing-stock ?
One word for all : whatever Luria does,
—If backed by his indignant troops he turn,

Revenge himself, and Florence go to ground,—
 Or, for a signal everlasting shame,
 He pardon you, simply seek better friends,
 Side with the Pisans and Lucchese for change
 —And if I, pledged to ingrates past belief,
 Dare fight against a man such fools call false,
 Who, inasmuch as he was true, fights me,—
 Whichever way he win, he wins for worth,
 For every soldier, for all true and good !
 Sir, chronicling the rest, omit not this !

As they go, enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Hus. Saw'st thou?—For they are gone ! The world
 lies bare

Before thee, to be tasted, felt and seen
 Like what it is, now Florence goes away !
 Thou livest now, with men art man again !
 Those Florentines were all to thee of old ;
 But Braccio, but Domizia, gone is each,
 There lie beneath thee thine own multitudes !
 Saw'st thou ?

Lur. I saw.

Hus. Then, hold thy course, my king !
 The years return. Let thy heart have its way :
 Ah, they would play with thee as with all else,
 Turn thee to use, and fashion thee anew,
 Find out God's fault in thee as in the rest ?
 Oh watch, oh listen only to these fiends
 Once at their occupation ! Ere ye know,
 The free great heaven is shut, their stifling pall

Drops till it frets the very tingling hair,
 So weighs it on our head,—and, for the earth,
 Our common earth is tethered up and down,
 Over and across—"here shalt thou move," they cry!

Lur. Ay, Husain?

Hus. So have they spoiled all beside

So stands a man girt round with Florentines,
 Priests, greybeards, Braccios, women, boys and spie.
 All in one tale, all singing the same song,
 How thou must house, and live at bed and board,
 Take pledge and give it, go their every way,
 Breathe to their measure, make thy blood beat time
 With theirs—or, all is nothing—thou art lost—
 A savage, how shouldst thou perceive as they?
 Feel glad to stand 'neath God's close naked hand!
 Look up to it! Why, down they pull thy neck,
 Lest it crush thee, who feel'st it and wouldst kiss,
 Without their priests that needs must glove it first,
 Lest peradventure flesh offend thy lip.
 Love woman! Why, a very beast thou art!
 Thou must . . .

Lur. Peace, Husain!

Hus. Ay but, spoiling all.

For all, else true things, substituting false,
 That they should dare spoil, of all instincts, thine!
 Should dare to take thee with thine instincts up,
 Thy battle-ardours, like a ball of fire,
 And class them and allow them place and play
 So far, no farther ~ unabashed the while!

Thou with the soul that never can take rest—
 Thou born to do, undo, and do again,
 And never to be still,—wouldst thou make war?
 Oh, that is commendable, just and right!
 “Come over,” say they, “have the honour due
 “In living out thy nature! Fight thy best:
 “It is to be for Florence, not thyself!
 “For thee, it were a horror and a plague;
 “For us, when war is made for Florence, see,
 “How all is changed: the fire that fed on earth
 “Now towers to heaven!”—

Lur. And what sealed up so long
 My Husain's mouth?

Hus. Oh friend, oh lord—for me,
 What am I?—I was silent at thy side,
 Who am a part of thee. It is thy hand,
 Thy foot that glows when in the heart fresh blood
 Boils up, thou heart of me! Now, live again,
 Again love as thou likest, hate as free!
 Turn to no Braccios nor Domizias now,
 To ask, before thy very limbs dare move,
 If Florence' welfare be concerned thereby!

Lur. So clear what Florence must expect of me?

Hus. Both armies against Florence! Take revenge!
 Wide, deep—to live upon, in feeling now,—
 And, after live, in memory, year by year—
 And, with the dear conviction, die at last!
 She lies now at thy pleasure: pleasure have I
 Their vaunted intellect that gilds our sense,

And blends with life, to show it better by,
 —How think'st thou?—I have turned that light on them!
 They called our thirst of war a transient thing;
 “The battle-element must pass away
 “From life,” they said, “and leave a tranquil world.”
 —Master, I took their light and turned it full
 On that dull turgid vein they said would burst
 And pass away; and as I looked on life,
 Still everywhere I tracked this, though it hid
 And shifted, lay so silent as it thought,
 Changed shape and hue yet ever was the same.
 Why, 't was all fighting, all their nobler life!
 All work was fighting, every harm—defeat,
 And every joy obtained—a victory!
 Be not their dupe!

—Their dupe? That hour is past!
 Here stand'st thou in the glory and the calm!
 All is determined! Silence for me now!

[HUSAIN *goes.*

Lur. Have I heard all?

Dom. [*advancing from the background.*] No, Luria, I remain!

Not from the motives these have urged on thee,
 Ignoble, insufficient, incomplete,
 And pregnant each with sure seeds of decay,
 As failing of sustainment from thyself,
 —Neither from low revenge, nor selfishness,
 Nor savage lust of power, nor one, nor all,
 Shalt thou abolish Florence! I proclaim

The angel in thee, and reject the sprites
Which ineffectual crowd about his strength,
And mingle with his work and claim a share !
Inconsciously to the augustest end
Thou hast arisen : second not in rank
So much as time, to him who first ordained
That Florence, thou art to destroy, should be.
Yet him a star, too, guided, who broke first
The pride of lonely power, the life apart,
And made the eminences, each to each,
Lean o'er the level world and let it lie
Safe from the thunder henceforth 'neath their tops ;
So the few famous men of old combined,
And let the multitude rise underneath,
And reach them and unite—so Florence grew :
Braccio speaks true, it was well worth the price.
But when the sheltered many grew in pride
And grudged the station of the elected ones,
Who, greater than their kind, are truly great
Only in voluntary servitude—
'Time was for thee to rise, and thou art here.
Such plague possessed this Florence : who can tell
The mighty girth and greatness at the heart
Of those so perfect pillars of the grove
She pulled down in her envy ? Who as I,
The light weak parasite born but to twine
Round each of them and, measuring them, live ?
My light love keeps the matchless circle safe,
My slender life proves what has passed away.

I lived when they departed ; lived to cling
 To thee, the mighty stranger ; thou wouldst rise
 And burst the thralldom, and avenge, I knew.
 I have done nothing ; all was thy strong bole.
 But a bird's weight can break the infant tree
 Which after holds an aery in its arms,
 And 't was my care that nought should warp thy spire
 From rising to the height ; the roof is reached
 O' the forest, break through, see extend the sky !
 Go on to Florence, Luria ! 'T is man's cause !
 Fail thou, and thine own fall were least to dread :
 Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
 Encouragest her sin so much the more—
 And while the ignoble past is justified,
 Thou all the surelier warp'st the future growth,
 The chiefs to come, the Lurias yet unborn,
 That, greater than thyself, are reached o'er thee
 Who giv'st the vantage-ground their foes require,
 As o'er my prostrate House thyself wast reached !
 Man calls thee, God requites thee ! All is said,
 The mission of my House fulfilled at last :
 And the mere woman, speaking for herself,
 Reserves speech—it is now no woman's time.

[DOMIZIA goes.

Lur. Thus at the last must figure Luria, then !
 Doing the various work of all his friends,
 And answering every purpose save his own.
 No doubt, 't is well for them to wish ; but him—
 After the exploit what were left ? Perchance

A little pride upon the swarthy brow,
At having brought successfully to bear
'Gainst Florence' self her own especial arms,—
Her craftiness, impelled by fiercer strength
From Moorish blood than feeds the northern wit.
But after !—once the easy vengeance willed,
Beautiful Florence at a word laid low
—(Not in her domes and towers and palaces,
Not even in a dream, that outrage !)—low,
As shamed in her own eyes henceforth for ever,
Low, for the rival cities round to laugh,
Conquered and pardoned by a hireling Moor !
—For him, who did the irreparable wrong,
What would be left, his life's illusion fled,—
What hope or trust in the forlorn wide world ?
How strange that Florence should mistake me so !
Whence grew this ? What withdrew her faith from me ?
Some cause ! These fretful-blooded children talk
Against their mother,—they are wronged, they say—
Notable wrongs her smile makes up again !
So, taking fire at each supposed offence,
They may speak rashly, suffer for their speech :
But what could it have been in word or deed
Thus injured me ? Some one word spoken more
Out of my heart, and all had changed perhaps.
My fault, it must have been,—for, what gain they ?
Why risk the danger ? See, what I could do !
And my fault, wherefore visit upon them,
My Florentines ? The notable revenge,

I meditated ! To stay passively,
Attend their summons, be as they dispose !
Why, if my very soldiers keep the rank,
And if my chieftains acquiesce, what then ?
I ruin Florence, teach her friends mistrust,
Confirm her enemies in harsh belief,
And when she finds one day, as find she must,
The strange mistake, and how my heart was hers,
Shall it console me, that my Florentines
Walk with a sadder step, in graver guise,
Who took me with such frankness, praised me so,
At the glad outset ? Had they loved me less,
They had less feared what seemed a change in me.
And after all, who did the harm ? Not they !
How could they interpose with those old fools
I' the council ? Suffer for those old fools' sake—
They, who made pictures of me, sang the songs
About my battles ? Ah, we Moors get blind
Out of our proper world, where we can see !
The sun that guides is closer to us ! There—
There, my own orb ! He sinks from out the sky !
Why, there ! a whole day has he blessed the land,
My land, our Florence all about the hills,
The fields and gardens, vineyards, olive-grounds,
All have been blest—and yet we Florentines
With souls intent upon our battle here,
Found that he rose too soon, or set too late,
Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa much—
Therefore we wronged him ! Does he turn in ire

To burn the earth that cannot understand ?
Or drop out quietly, and leave the sky,
His task once ended ? Night wipes blame away.
Another morning from my East shall spring
And find all eyes at leisure, all disposed
To watch and understand its work, no doubt.
So, praise the new sun, the successor praise,
Praise the new Luria and forget the old !

[Taking a phial from his breast.

—Strange ! This is all I brought from my own land
To help me : Europe would supply the rest,
All needs beside, all other helps save one !
I thought of adverse fortune, battles lost,
The natural upbraiding of the loser,
And then this quiet remedy to seek
At end of the disastrous day. *[He drinks.*

'T is sought !

This was my happy triumph-morning : Florence
Is saved : I drink this, and ere night,—die ! Strange !

ACT V.

NIGHT.

LURIA and PUCCIO.

Lur. I thought to do this, not to talk this : well,
Such were my projects for the city's good,
To help her in attack or by defence.

Time, here as elsewhere, soon or late may take
 Our foresight by surprise thro' chance and change ;
 But not a little we provide against
 —If you see clear on every point.

Puc.

Most clear.

Lur. Then all is said—not much, if you count
 words,

Yet to an understanding ear enough ;
 And all that my brief stay permits, beside.
 Nor must you blame me, as I sought to teach
 My elder in command, or threw a doubt
 Upon the very skill, it comforts me
 To know I leave,—your steady soldiership
 Which never failed me : yet, because it seemed
 A stranger's eye might haply note defect
 That skill, through use and custom, overlooks
 I have gone into the old cares once more,
 As if I had to come and save again
 Florence—that May—that morning ! 'T is night now.
 Well—I broke off with ? . . .

Puc.

Of the past campaign

You spoke—of measures to be kept in mind
 For future use.

Lur.

True, so . . . but, time—no time !

As well end here : remember this, and me !
 Farewell now !

Puc.

Dare I speak ?

Lur.

South o' the river—

How is the second stream called . . . no,—the third ?

Puc. Pesa.

Lur. And a stone's-cast from the fording-place,
To the east,—the little mount's name ?

Puc.

Lupo.

Lur.

Ay !

Ay—there the tower, and all that side is safe !
With San Romano, west of Evola,
San Miniato, Scala, Empoli,
Five towers in all,—forget not !

Puc.

Fear not me !

Lur. —Nor to memorialize the Council now,
I' the easy hour, on those battalions' claim,
On the other side by Staggia on the hills,
Who kept the Sienese at check !

Puc.

One word—

Sir, I must speak ! That you submit yourself
To Florence' bidding, howsoe'er it prove,
And give up the command to me—is much,
Too much, perhaps : but what you tell me now,
Even will affect the other course you choose—
Poor as it may be, perils even that !
Refuge you seek at Pisa : yet these plans
All militate for Florence, all conclude
Your formidable work to make her queen
O' the country,—which her rivals rose against
When you began it,—which to interrupt,
Pisa would buy you off at any price !
You cannot mean to sue for Pisa's help,
With this made perfect and on record ?

Lur.

I—

At Pisa, and for refuge, do you say?

Puc. Where are you going, then? You must decide
On leaving us, a silent fugitive,
Alone, at night—you, stealing through our lines,
Who were this morning's Luria,—you escape
To painfully begin the world once more,
With such a past, as it had never been!
Where are you going?

Lur.

Not so far, my Puccio,

But that I hope to hear, enjoy and praise
(If you mind praise from your old captain yet)
Each happy blow you strike for Florence!

Puc.

Ay,

But ere you gain your shelter, what may come?
For see—though nothing's surely known as yet,
Still—truth must out—I apprehend the worst.
If mere suspicion stood for certainty
Before, there's nothing can arrest the step
Of Florence toward your ruin, once on foot.
Forgive her fifty times, it matters not!
And having disbelieved your innocence,
How can she trust your magnanimity?
You may do harm to her—why then, you will!
And Florence is sagacious in pursuit.
Have you a friend to count on?

Lur.

One sure friend.

Puc. Potent?*Lur.*

All-potent.

Puc. And he is apprised ?

Lur. He waits me.

Puc. So !—Then I, put in your place,
Making my profit of all done by you,
Calling your labours mine, reaping their fruit,
To this, the State's gift, now add yours beside—
That I may take as my peculiar store
These your instructions to work Florence good.
And if, by putting some few happily
In practice, I should both advantage her
And draw down honour on myself,—what then ?

Lur. Do it, my Puccio ! I shall know and praise !

Puc. Though so, men say, “ mark what we gain by
change

“ —A Puccio for a Luria ! ”

Lur. Even so !

Puc. Then, not for fifty hundred Florences,
Would I accept one office save my own,
Fill any other than my rightful post
Here at your feet, my captain and my lord !
That such a cloud should break, such trouble be,
Ere a man settle, soul and body, down
Into his true place and take rest for ever !
Here were my wise eyes fixed on your right-hand,
And so the bad thoughts came and the worse words,
And all went wrong and painfully enough,—
No wonder,—till, the right spot stumbled on,
All the jar stops, and there is peace at once !
I am yours now,—a tool your right-hand wields !

God's love, that I should live, the man I am,
On orders, warrants, patents and the like,
As if there were no glowing eye i' the world,
To glance straight inspiration to my brain,
No glorious heart to give mine twice the beats !
For, see—my doubt, where is it ?—fear ? 't is flown !
And Florence and her anger are a tale
To scare a child ! Why, half-a-dozen words
Will tell her, spoken as I now can speak,
Her error, my ~~past~~ folly—and all 's right,
And you are Luria, our great chief again !
Or at the worst—which worst were best of all—
To exile or to death I follow you !

Lur. Thanks, Puccio ! Let me use the privilege
You grant me : if I still command you,—stay !
Remain here—my vicegerent, it shall be,
And not successor : let me, as of old,
Still serve the State, my spirit prompting yours—
Still triumph, one for both. There ! Leave me
now !

You cannot disobey my first command ?
Remember what I spoke of Jacopo,
And what you promised to concert with him !
Send him to speak with me—nay, no farewell !
You shall be by me when the sentence comes.

[PUCCIO goes

So, there 's one Florentine returns again !
Out of the genial morning company,
One face is left to take into the night.

Enter JACOPO.

Jac. I wait for your command, sir.

Lur.

What, so soon ?

I thank your ready presence and fair word.
I used to notice you in early days
As of the other species, so to speak,
Those watchers of the lives of us who act—
That weigh our motives, scrutinize our thoughts.
So, I propound this to your faculty
As you would tell me, were a town to take
. . That is, of old. I am departing hence
Under these imputations ; that is nought—
I leave no friend on whom they may rebound,
Hardly a name behind me in the land,
Being a stranger : all the more behoves
That I regard how altered were the case
With natives of the country, Florentines
On whom the like mischance should fall : the roots
O' the tree survive the ruin of the trunk—
No root of mine will throb—you understand.
But I had predecessors, Florentines,
Accused as I am now, and punished so—
The Traversari : you know more than I
How stigmatized they are, and lost in shame.
Now Puccio, who succeeds me in command,
Both served them and succeeded, in due time ;
He knows the way, holds proper documents,
And has the power to lay the simple truth
Before an active spirit, as I count yours :

And also there 's Tiburzio, my new friend,
 Will, at a word, confirm such evidence,
 He being the great chivalric soul we know.
 I put it to your tact, sir—were 't not well,
 —A grace, though but for contrast's sake, no more,—
 If you who witness, and have borne a share
 Involuntarily in my mischance,
 Should, of your proper motion, set your skill
 To indicate—that is, investigate
 The right or wrong of what mischance befell
 Those famous citizens, your countrymen?
 Nay, you shall promise nothing : but reflect,
 And if your sense of justice prompt you—good !

Jac. And if, the trial past, their fame stand clear
 To all men's eyes, as yours, my lord, to mine—
 Their ghosts may sleep in quiet satisfied !
 For me, a straw thrown up into the air,
 My testimony goes for a straw's worth.
 I used to hold by the instructed brain,
 And move with Braccio as my master-wind ;
 The heart leads surelier : I must move with you—
 As greatest now, who ever were the best.
 So, let the last and humblest of your servants
 Accept your charge, as Braccio's heretofore,
 And tender homage by obeying you !

[JACOPO goes.]

Lur. Another !—Luria goes not poorly forth.
 If we could wait ! The only fault 's with time ;
 All men become good creatures : but so slow !

Enter DOMIZIA.

Lur. Ah, you once more ?

Dom. Domizia, whom you knew,
Performed her task, and died with it. 'T is I,
Another woman, you have never known.
Let the past sleep now !

Lur. I have done with it.

Dom. How inexhaustibly the spirit grows !
One object, she seemed erewhile born to reach
With her whole energies and die content,—
So like a wall at the world's edge it stood,
With nought beyond to live for,—is that reached?—
Already are new undreamed energies
Outgrowing under, and extending farther
To a new object ;—there 's another world !
See ! I have told the purpose of my life ;
'T is gained : you are decided, well or ill—
You march on Florence, or submit to her—
My work is done with you, your brow declares.
But—leave you ?—More of you seems yet to reach .
I stay for what I just begin to see.

Lur. So that you turn not to the past !

Dom. You trace
Nothing but ill in it—my selfish impulse,
Which sought its end and disregarded yours ?

Lur. Speak not against your nature : best, each keep
His own—you, yours—most, now that I keep mine,
—At least, fall by it, having too weakly stood.
God's finger marks distinctions, all so fine,

We would confound : the lesser has its use,
Which, when it apes the greater, is foregone.
I, born a Moor, lived half a Florentine ;
But, punished properly, can end, a Moor.
Beside, there 's something makes me understand
Your nature : I have seen it.

Dom. Aught like mine ?

Lur. In my own East . . if you would stoop and help
My barbarous illustration ! It sounds ill ;
Yet there 's no wrong at bottom : rather, praise.

Dom. Well ?

Lur. We have creatures there, which if you saw
The first time, you would doubtless marvel at
For their surpassing beauty, craft and strength.
And though it were a lively moment's shock
Wherein you found the purpose of forked tongues
That seem innocuous in their lambent play,
Yet, once made know such grace requires such guard,
Your reason soon would acquiesce, I think,
In wisdom which made all things for the best—
So, take them, good with ill, contentedly,
The prominent beauty with the latent sting.
I am glad to have seen you wondrous Florentines :
Yet . .

Dom. I am here to listen.

Lur. My own East !

How nearer God we were ! He glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours !

We feel him, nor by painful reason know !
The everlasting minute of creation
Is felt there ; now it is, as it was then ;
All changes at his instantaneous will,
Not by the operation of a law
Whose maker is elsewhere at other work.
His hand is still engaged upon his world—
Man's praise can forward it, man's prayer suspend,
For is not God all-mighty ? To recast
The world, erase old things and make them new,
What costs it him ? So, man breathes nobly there !
And inasmuch as (feeling, the East's gift,
Is quick and transient—comes, and lo, is gone—
While Northern thought is slow and durable,)
Surely a mission was reserved for me,
Who, born with a perception of the power
And use of the North's thought for us of the East,
Should have remained and turned it to account,
Giving thought's character and permanence
To the too transitory feeling there—
Writing God's message plain in mortal words.
Instead of which, I leave my fated field
For this where such a task is needed least,
Where all are born consummate in the art
I just perceive a chance of making mine,—
And then, deserting thus my early post,
I wonder that the men I come among
Mistake me ! There, how all had understood,
Still brought fresh stuff for me to stamp and keep,

Fresh instinct to translate them into law !

Me, who . . .

Dom. Who here the greater task achieve,
More needful even : who have brought fresh stuff
For us to mould, interpret and prove right,—
New feeling fresh from God, which, could we know
O' the instant, where had been our need of it ?
—Whose life re-teaches us what life should be,
What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,
All, once revealed but taught us so long since
That, having mere tradition of the fact,—
Truth copied falteringly from copies faint,
The early traits all dropped away,—we said
On sight of faith like yours, “ So looks not faith
“ We understand, described and praised before.”
But still, the feat was dared ; and though at first
It suffered from our haste, yet trace by trace
Old memories reappear, old truth returns,
Our slow thought does its work, and all 's re-known.
Oh noble Luria ! What you have decreed
I see not, but no animal revenge,
No brute-like punishment of bad by worse—
It cannot be, the gross and vulgar way
Traced for me by convention and mistake,
Has gained that calm approving eye and brow !
Spare Florence, after all ! Let Luria trust
To his own soul, and I will trust him mine !

Lur. In time !

Dom. How, Luria ?

Lur. It is midnight now,
And they arrive from Florence with my fate.

Dom. I hear no step.

Lur. I feel one, as you say.

Enter HUSAIN.

Hus. The man returned from Florence !

Lur. As I knew.

Hus. He seeks thee.

Lur. And I only wait for him.
Aught else ?

Hus. A movement of the Lucchese troops
Southward—

Lur. Toward Florence ? Have out instantly . . .
Ah, old use clings ! Puccio must care henceforth.
In—quick—'t is nearly midnight ! Bid him come !

Enter TIBURZIO, BRACCIO, and PUCCIO.

Lur. Tiburzio ?—not at Pisa ?

Tib. I return
From Florence : I serve Pisa, and must think
By such procedure I have served her best.
A people is but the attempt of many
To rise to the completer life of one ;
And those who live as models for the mass
Are singly of more value than they all.
Such man are you, and such a time is this,
That your sole fate concerns a nation more
Than its apparent welfare ; and to prove
Your rectitude, and duly crown the same,

Imports us far beyond the day's event,
A battle's loss or gain : the mass remains,—
Keep but the model safe, new men will rise
To take its mould, and other days to prove
How great a good was Luria's having lived.
I might go try my fortune as you bade,
And joining Lucca, helped by your disgrace,
Repair our harm—so were to-day's work done ;
But where find Luria for our sons to see ?
No, I look farther. I have testified
(Declaring my submission to your arms)
Her full success to Florence, making clear
Your probity, as none else could : I spoke,
And out it shone !

Lur. Ah—until Braccio spoke !

Brac. Till Braccio told in just a word the whole—
His lapse to error, his return to knowledge :
Which told . . . Nay, Luria, I should droop the head,
I whom shame rests with ! Yet I dare look up,
Sure of your pardon when I sue for it,
Knowing you wholly. Let the midnight end !
'T is morn approaches ! Still you answer not ?
Sunshine succeeds the shadow past away ;
Our faces, which phantasmal grew and false,
Are all that felt it : they close round you, turn
Themselves now in its complete vanishing.
Speak, Luria ! Here begins your true career :
Look up to it ! All now is possible,
The glory and the grandeur of each dream.

And every prophecy shall be fulfilled
Save one—(nay, now your word must come at last)
—That you would punish Florence!

Hus. [*pointing to LURIA's dead body.*] That is done

CHRISTMAS-EVE & EASTER-DAY.

FLORENCE, 1850.



CHRISTMAS-EVE & EASTER-DAY

CHRISTMAS-EVE.

I.

OUT of the little chapel I burst,
Into the fresh night-air again.
Five minutes full, I waited first
In the doorway, to escape the rain
That drove in gusts down the common's centre,
At the edge of which the chapel stands,
Before I plucked up heart to enter.
Heaven knows how many sorts of hands
Reached past me, groping for the latch
Of the inner door that hung on catch
More obstinate the more they fumbled,
Till, giving way at last with a scold
Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled
One sheep more to the rest in fold,
And left me irresolute, standing sentry
In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry,
Four feet long by two feet wide,

Partitioned off from the vast inside—
I blocked up half of it at least.
No remedy ; the rain kept driving.
They eyed me much as some wild beast,
That congregation, still arriving,
Some of them by the main road, white
A long way past me into the night,
Skirting the common, then diverging ;
Not a few suddenly emerging
From the common's self thro' the paling-gaps,
—They house in the gravel-pits perhaps,
Where the road stops short with its safeguard border
Of lamps, as tired of such disorder ;—
But the most turned in yet more abruptly
From a certain squalid knot of alleys,
Where the town's bad blood once slept corruptly,
Which now the little chapel rallies
And leads into day again,—its priestliness
Lending itself to hide their beastliness
So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),
And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on
Those neophytes too much in lack of it,
That, where you cross the common as I did,
And meet the party thus presided,
“ Mount Zion ” with Love-lane at the back of it,
They front you as little disconcerted
As, bound for the hills, her fate averted,
And her wicked people made to mind him,
Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

II.

Well, from the road, the lanes or the common,
In came the flock: the fat weary woman,
Panting and bewildered, down-clapping
Her umbrella with a mighty report,
Grounded it by me, wry and flapping,
A wreck of whalebones; then, with a snort,
Like a startled horse, at the interloper
(Who humbly knew himself improper,
But could not shrink up small enough)
—Round to the door, and in,—the gruff
Hinge's invariable scold
Making my very blood run cold.
Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered
On broken clogs, the many-tattered
Little old-faced peaking sister-turned-mother
Of the sickly babe she tried to smother
Somehow up, with its spotted face,
From the cold, on her breast, the one warm place;
She too must stop, wring the poor ends dry
Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby
Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping
Already from my own clothes' dropping,
Which yet she seemed to grudge I should stand on;
Then, stooping down to take off her pattens,
She bore them defiantly, in each hand one,
Planted together before her breast
And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.

Close on her heels, the dingy satins
Of a female something, past me flitted,
With lips as much too white, as a streak
Lay far too red on each hollow cheek ;
And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied
All that was left of a woman once,
Holding at least its tongue for the nonce.
Then a tall yellow man, like the Penitent Thief,
With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief,
And eyelids screwed together tight,
Led himself in by some inner light.
And, except from him, from each that entered,
I got the same interrogation—
“ What, you, the alien, you have ventured
“ To take with us, the elect, your station ?
“ A carer for none of it, a Gallio ! ”—
Thus, plain as print, I read the glance
At a common prey, in each countenance
As of huntsman giving his hounds the tallyho.
And, when the door's cry drowned their wonder,
The draught, it always sent in shutting,
Made the flame of the single tallow candle
In the cracked square lantern I stood under,
Shoot its blue lip at me, rebutting
As it were, the luckless cause of scandal :
I verily fancied the zealous light
(In the chapel's secret, too !) for spite
Would shudder itself clean off the wick,
With the airs of a Saint John's Candlestick.

There was no standing it much longer.

- “ Good folks,” thought I, as resolve grew stronger,
“ This way you perform the Grand-Inquisitor,
“ When the weather sends you a chance visitor?
“ You are the men, and wisdom shall die with you,
“ And none of the old Seven Churches vie with you !
“ But still, despite the pretty perfection
“ To which you carry your trick of exclusiveness,
“ And, taking God’s word under wise protection,
“ Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,
“ And bid one reach it over hot ploughshares,—
“ Still, as I say, though you ’ve found salvation,
“ If I should choose to cry, as now, ‘ Shares ! ’—
“ See if the best of you bars me my ration !
“ I prefer, if you please, for my expounder
“ Of the laws of the feast, the feast’s own Founder ;
“ Mine’s the same right with your poorest and sickliest,
“ Supposing I don the marriage vestiment :
“ So, shut your mouth and open your Testament,
“ And carve me my portion at your quickliest ! ”

Accordingly, as a shoemaker’s lad

With wizened face in want of soap,

And wet apron wound round his waist like a rope,

(After stopping outside, for his cough was bad,

To get the fit over, poor gentle creature,

And so avoid disturbing the preacher)

—Passed in, I sent my elbow spikewise

At the shutting door, and entered likewise,

Received the hinge’s accustomed greeting,

And crossed the threshold's magic pentacle,
And found myself in full conventicle,
—To wit, in Zion Chapel Meeting,
On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,
Which, calling its flock to their special clover,
Found all assembled and one sheep over,
Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was mine.

III.

I very soon had enough of it.
The hot smell and the human noises,
And my neighbour's coat, the greasy cuff of it,
Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises,
Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure
Of the preaching-man's immense stupidity,
As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,
To meet his audience's avidity.
You needed not the wit of the Sibyl
To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling :
No sooner got our friend an inkling
Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,
(Whene'er 't was that the thought first struck him,
How death, at unawares, might duck him
Deeper than the grave, and quench
The gin-shop's light in hell's grim drench)
Than he handled it so, in fine irreverence,
As to hug the book of books to pieces :
And, a patchwork of chapters and texts in severance,
Not improved by the private dog's-cars and creases,

Having clothed his own soul with, he 'd fain see equipt
yours,—

So tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.
And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt :
Nay, had but a single face of my neighbours
Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labours
Were help which the world could be saved without,
'T is odds but I might have borne in quiet
A qualm or two at my spiritual diet,
Or (who can tell ?) perchance even mustered
Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon :
But the flock sat on, divinely flustered,
Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon
With such content in every snuffle,
As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.
My old fat woman purred with pleasure,
And thumb round thumb went twirling faster,
While she, to his periods keeping measure,
Maternally devoured the pastor.
The man with the handkerchief, untied it,
Showed us a horrible wen inside it,
Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,
And rocked himself as the woman was doing.
The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking,
Kept down his cough. 'T was too provoking !
My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff of it ;
So, saying like Eve when she plucked the apple,
" I wanted a taste, and now there 's enough of it,"
I flung out of the little chapel.

IV.

There was a lull in the rain, a lull
In the wind too; the moon was risen,
And would have shone out pure and full,
But for the ramparted cloud-prison,
Block on block built up in the West,
For what purpose the wind knows best,
Who changes his mind continually.
And the empty other half of the sky
Seemed in its silence as if it knew
What, any moment, might look through
A chance gap in that fortress massy :—
Through its fissures you got hints
Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,
Now, a dull lion-colour, now, brassy
Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,
Like furnace-smoke just ere the flames bellow,
All a-simmer with intense strain
To let her through,—then blank again,
At the hope of her appearance failing.
Just by the chapel, a break in the railing
Shows a narrow path directly across ;
'T is ever dry walking there, on the moss—
Besides, you go gently all the way uphill.
I stooped under and soon felt better ;
My head grew lighter, my limbs more supple,
As I walked on, glad to have slipt the fetter.
My mind was full of the scene I had left,

That placid flock, that pastor vociferant,
—How this outside was pure and different !
The sermon, now—what a mingled weft
Of good and ill ! Were either less,
Its fellow had coloured the whole distinctly ;
But alas for the excellent earnestness,
And the truths, quite true if stated succinctly,
But as surely false, in their quaint presentment,
However to pastor and flock's contentment !
Say rather, such truths looked false to your eyes.
With his provings and parallels twisted and twined,
Till how could you know them, grown double their size
In the natural fog of the good man's mind,
Like yonder spots of our roadside lamps,
Haloed about with the common's damps ?
'Truth remains true, the fault's in the prover ;
The zeal was good, and the aspiration ;
And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over,
Pharaoh received no demonstration,
By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three,
Of the doctrine of the Trinity,—
Although, as our preacher thus embellished it,
Apparently his hearers relished it
With so unfeigned a gust—who knows if
They did not prefer our friend to Joseph ?
But so it is everywhere, one way with all of them !
These people have really felt, no doubt,
A something, the motion they style the Call of them ;
And this is their method of bringing about,

By a mechanism of words and tones,
(So many texts in so many groans)
A sort of reviving and reproducing,
More or less perfectly, (who can tell?—)
Of the mood itself, that strengthens by using ;
And how it happens, I understand well.
A tune was born in my head last week,
Out of the thump-thump and shriek-shriek
Of the train, as I came by it, up from Manchester ;
And when, next week, I take it back again,
My head will sing to the engine's clack again,
While it only makes my neighbour's haunches stir,
—Finding no dormant musical sprout
In him, as in me, to be jolted out.
'Tis the taught already that profits by teaching ;
He gets no more from the railway's preaching
Than, from this preacher who does the rail's office, I :
Whom therefore the flock cast a jealous eye on.
Still, why paint over their door " Mount Zion,"
To which all flesh shall come, saith the prophecy ?

v.

But wherefore be harsh on a single case ?
After how many modes, this Christmas-Eve,
Does the selfsame weary thing take place ?
The same endeavour to make you believe,
And with much the same effect, no more :
Each method abundantly convincing,
As I say, to those convinced before,

But scarce to be swallowed without wincing
By the not-as-yet-convinced. For me,
I have my own church equally :
And in this church my faith sprang first !
(I said, as I reached the rising ground,
And the wind began again, with a burst
Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound
From the heart beneath, as if, God speeding me,
I entered his church-door, nature leading me)
—In youth I looked to these very skies,
And probing their immensities,
I found God there, his visible power ;
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
Of the power, an equal evidence
That his love, there too, was the nobler dower.
For the loving worm within its clod,
Were diviner than a loveless god
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.
You know what I mean : God's all, man's nought :
But also, God, whose pleasure brought
Man into being, stands away
As it were a handbreadth off, to give
Room for the newly-made to live,
And look at him from a place apart,
And use his gifts of brain and heart,
Given, indeed, but to keep for ever.
Who speaks of man, then, must not sever
Man's very elements from man,
Saying, " But all is God's"—whose plan

Seeing death come and choose about me,
And my dearest ones depart without me.
No : love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it,
Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,
The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,
Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it.
And I shall behold thee, face to face,
O God, and in thy light retrace
How in all I loved here, still wast thou !
Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would now,
I shall find as able to satiate
The love, thy gift, as my spirit's wonder
Thou art able to quicken and sublimiate,
With this sky of thine, that I now walk under,
And glory in thee for, as I gaze
Thus, thus ! Oh, let men keep their ways
Of seeking thee in a narrow shrine—
Be this my way ! And this is mine !

VI.

For lo, what think you ? suddenly
The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky
Received at once the full fruition
Of the moon's consummate apparition.
The black cloud-barricade was riven,
Ruined beneath her feet, and driven
Deep in the West ; while, bare and breathless,
North and South and East lay ready
For a glorious thing that, dauntless, deathless,
Sprang across them and stood steady.

'T was a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,
From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
As the mother-moon's self, full in face.
It rose, distinctly at the base
With its seven proper colours chorded,
Which still, in the rising, were compressed,
Until at last they coalesced,
And supreme the spectral creature lorded
In a triumph of whitest white,—
Above which intervened the night.
But above night too, like only the next,
The second of a wondrous sequence,
Reaching in rare and rarer frequency,
Till the heaven of heavens were circumflexed,
Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
Fainter, flushier and flightier,—
Rapture dying along its verge.
Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
Whose, from the straining topmost dark,
On to the keystone of that arc?

VII.

This sight was shown me, there and then,—
Me, one out of a world of men,
Singled forth, as the chance might hap
To another if, in a thunderclap
Where I heard noise and you saw flame,
Some one man knew God called his name.
For me, I think I said, "Appear !

“ Good were it to be ever here.
“ If thou wilt, let me build to thee
“ Service-tabernacles three,
“ Where, forever in thy presence,
“ In ecstatic acquiescence,
“ Far alike from thriftless learning
“ And ignorance’s undiscerning,
“ I may worship and remain ! ”

Thus at the show above me, gazing
With upturned eyes, I felt my brain
Glutted with the glory, blazing
Throughout its whole mass, over and under,
Until at length it burst asunder
And out of it bodily there streamed,
The too-much glory, as it seemed,
Passing from out me to the ground,
Then palely serpentining round
Into the dark with mazy error.

VIII.

All at once I looked up with terror.
He was there.
He himself with his human air.
On the narrow pathway, just before.
I saw the back of him, no more—
He had left the chapel, then, as I.
I forgot all about the sky.
No face : only the sight
Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,

With a hem that I could recognise.
I felt terror, no surprise ;
My mind filled with the cataract,
At one bound of the mighty fact.
“ I remember, he did say
Doubtless, that, to this world's end,
Where two or three should meet and pray,
He would be in the midst, their friend ;
Certainly he was there with them ! ”
And my pulses leaped for joy
Of the golden thought without alloy,
That I saw his very vesture's hem.
Then rushed the blood back, cold and clear
With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear ;
And I hastened, cried out while I pressed
To the salvation of the vest,
“ But not so, Lord ! It cannot be
“ That thou, indeed, art leaving me—
“ Me, that have despised thy friends !
“ Did my heart make no amends ?
“ Thou art the love of God—above
“ His power, didst hear me place his love,
“ And that was leaving the world for thee :
“ Therefore thou must not turn from me
“ As I had chosen the other part.
“ Folly and pride o'ercame my heart.
“ Our best is bad, nor bears thy test ;
“ Still, it should be our very best.
“ I thought it best that thou, the spirit,

“ Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,
“ And in beauty, as even we require it—
“ Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth,
“ I left but now, as scarcely fitted
“ For thee : I knew not what I pitied.
“ But, all I felt there, right or wrong,
“ What is it to thee, who curest sinning ?
“ Am I not weak as thou art strong ?
“ I have looked to thee from the beginning,
“ Straight up to thee through all the world
“ Which, like an idle scroll, lay furled
“ To nothingness on either side :
“ And since the time thou wast descried,
“ Spite of the weak heart, so have I
“ Lived ever, and so fain would die,
“ Living and dying, thee before !
“ But if thou leavest me—”

IX.

Less or more,

I suppose that I spoke thus.
When,—have mercy, Lord, 'on us !
The whole face turned upon me full.
And I spread myself beneath it,
As when the bleacher spreads, to see the it
In the cleansing sun, his wool,—
Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness
Some defiled, discoloured web—
So lay I, saturate with brightness.

And when the flood appeared to ebb,
Lo, I was walking, light and swift,
With my senses settling fast and steadying,
But my body caught up in the whirl and drift
Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying
On, just before me, still to be followed,
As it carried me after with its motion :
What shall I say?—as a path were hollowed
And a man went weltering through the ocean,
Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.
Darkness and cold were cloven, as through
I passed, upborne yet walking too.
And I turned to myself at intervals,—
“ So he said, so it befalls.
“ God who registers the cup
“ Of mere cold water, for his sake
“ To a disciple rendered up,
“ Disdains not his own thirst to slake
“ At the poorest love was ever offered :
“ And because my heart I proffered,
“ With true love trembling at the brim,
“ He suffers me to follow him
“ For ever, my own way,—dispensed
“ From seeking to be influenced
“ By all the less immediate ways
“ That earth, in worships manifold,
“ Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,
“ The garment's hem, which, lo, I hold !”

X.

And so we crossed the world and stopped.
For where am I, in city or plain,
Since I am 'ware of the world again?
And what is this that rises propped
With pillars of prodigious girth?
Is it really on the earth,
This miraculous Dome of God?
Has the angel's measuring-rod
Which numbered cubits, gem from gem,
'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem,
Meted it out,—and what he meted,
Have the sons of men completed?
—Binding, ever as he bade,
Columns in the colonnade
With arms wide open to embrace
The entry of the human race
To the breast of . . . what is it, yon building,
Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,
With marble for brick, and stones of price
For garniture of the edifice?
Now I see ; it is no dream ;
It stands there and it does not seem :
For ever, in pictures, thus it looks,
And thus I have read of it in books
Often in England, leagues away,
And wondered how these fountains play,
Growing up eternally

Each to a musical water-tree,
Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,
Before my eyes, in the light of the moon,
To the granite lavers underneath.
Liar and dreamer in your teeth !
I, the sinner that speak to you,
Was in Rome this night, and stood, and knew
Both this and more. For see, for see,
The dark is rent, mine eye is free
To pierce the crust of the outer wall,
And I view inside, and all there, all,
As the swarming hollow of a hive,
The whole Basilica alive !
Men in the chancel, body and nave,
Men on the pillars' architrave,
Men on the statues, men on the tombs
With popes and kings in their porphyry wombs,
All famishing in expectation
Of the main-altar's consummation.
For see, for see, the rapturous moment
Approaches, and earth's best endowment
Blends with heaven's ; the taper-fires
Pant up, the winding brazen spires
Heave loftier yet the baldachin ;
The incense-gaspings, long kept in,
Suspire in clouds ; the organ blatant
Holds his breath and grovels latent,
As if God's hushing finger grazed him,
(Like Behemoth when he praised him)

At the silver bell's shrill tinkling,
Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling
On the sudden pavement strewed
With faces of the multitude.
Earth breaks up, time drops away,
In flows heaven, with its new day
Of endless life, when he who trod,
Very man and very God,
This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
Dying the death whose signs remain
Up yonder on the accursed tree,—
Shall come again, no more to be
Of captivity the thrall,
But the one God, All in all,
King of kings, Lord of lords,
As his servant John received the words,
“ I died, and live for evermore ! ”

XI.

Yet I was left outside the door.
“ Why sit I here on the threshold-stone,
Left till he return, alone
Save for the garment's extreme fold
Abandoned still to bless my hold ? ”
My reason, to my doubt, replied,
As if a book were opened wide,
And at a certain page I traced
Every record undefaced,
Added by successive years,—

The harvestings of truth's stray ears
Singly gleaned, and in one sheaf
Bound together for belief.
Yes, I said—that he will go
And sit with these in turn, I know.
Their faith's heart beats, though her head swims
Too giddily to guide her limbs,
Disabled by their palsy-stroke
From propping me. Though Rome's gross yoke
Drops off, no more to be endured,
Her teaching is not so obscured
By errors and perversities,
That no truth shines athwart the lies :
And he, whose eye detects a spark
Even where, to man's, the whole seems dark,
May well see flame where each beholder
Acknowledges the embers smoulder.
But I, a mere man, fear to quit
The clue God gave me as most fit
To guide my footsteps through life's maze,
Because himself discerns all ways
Open to reach him : I, a man
Able to mark where faith began
To swerve aside, till from its summit
Judgment drops her damning plummet,
Pronouncing such a fatal space
Departed from the founder's base :
He will not bid me enter too,
But rather sit, as now I do,

Awaiting his return outside.

—'T was thus my reason straight replied
And joyously I turned, and pressed
The garment's skirt upon my breast,
Until, afresh its light suffusing me,
My heart cried " What has been abusing me
That I should wait here lonely and coldly,
Instead of rising, entering boldly,
Baring truth's face, and letting drift
Her veils of lies as they choose to shift ?
Do these men praise him ? I will raise
My voice up to their point of praise !
I see the error ; but above
The scope of error, see the love.—
Oh, love of those first Christian days !
—Fanned so soon into a blaze,
From the spark preserved by the trampled sect,
That the antique sovereign Intellect
Which then sat ruling in the world,
Like a change in dreams, was hurled
From the throne he reigned upon :
You looked up and he was gone.
Gone, his glory of the pen !
—Love, with Greece and Rome in ken,
Bade her scribes abhor the trick
Of poetry and rhetoric,
And exult with hearts set free,
In blessed imbecility
Scrawled, perchance, on some torn sheet

Leaving Sallust incomplete.
Gone, his pride of sculptor, painter !
—Love, while able to acquaint her
While the thousand statues yet
Fresh from chisel, pictures wet
From brush, she saw on every side,
Chose rather with an infant's pride
To frame those portents which impart
Such unction to true Christian Art.
Gone, music too ! The air was stirred
By happy wings : Terpander's bird
(That, when the cold came, fled away)
Would tarry not the wintry day,—
As more-enduring sculpture must,
Till filthy saints rebuked the gust
With which they chanced to get a sight
Of some dear naked Aphrodite
They glanced a thought above the toes of,
By breaking zealously her nose off.
Love, surely, from that music's lingering,
Might have filched her organ-fingering,
Nor chosen rather to set prayings
To hog-grunts, praises to horse-neighings
Love was the startling thing, the new ;
Love was the all-sufficient too ;
And seeing that, you see the rest :
As a babe can find its mother's breast
As well in darkness as in light,
Love shut our eyes, and all seemed right.

True, the world's eyes are open now :
—Less need for me to disallow
Some few that keep Love's zone unbuckled,
Peevish as ever to be suckled,
Lulled by the same old baby-prattle
With intermixture of the rattle,
When she would have them creep, stand steady
Upon their feet, or walk already,
Not to speak of trying to climb.
I will be wise another time,
And not desire a wall between us,
When next I see a church-roof cover
So many species of one genus,
All with foreheads bearing *lover*
Written above the earnest eyes of them ;
All with breasts that beat for beauty,
Whether sublimed, to the surprise of them,
In noble daring, steadfast duty,
The heroic in passion, or in action,—
Or, lowered for sense's satisfaction,
To the mere outside of human creatures,
Mere perfect form and faultless features.
What ? with all Rome here, whence to levy
Such contributions to their appetite,
With women and men in a gorgeous bevy,
They take, as it were, a padlock, clap it tight
On their southern eyes, restrained from feeding
On the glories of their ancient reading,
On the beauties of their modern singing,

On the wonders of the builder's bringing,
On the majesties of Art around them,—
And, all these loves, late struggling incessant,
When faith has at last united and bound them,
They offer up to God for a present?
Why, I will, on the whole, be rather proud of it,—
And, only taking the act in reference
To the other recipients who might have allowed it,
I will rejoice that God had the preference."

XII.

So I summed up my new resolves :
" Too much love there can never be.
And where the intellect devolves
Its function on love exclusively,
I, a man who possesses both,
Will accept the provision, nothing loth,
—Will feast my love, then depart elsewhere,
That my intellect may find its share.
And ponder, O soul, the while thou departest,
And see thou applaud the great heart of the artist,
Who, examining the capabilities
Of the block of marble he has to fashion
Into a type of thought or passion,—
Not always, using obvious facilities,
Shapes it, as any artist can,
Into a perfect symmetrical man,
Complete from head to foot of the life-size,
Such as old Adam stood in his wife's eyes,—

But, now and then, bravely aspires to consummate
A Colossus by no means so easy to come at,
And uses the whole of his block for the bust,
Leaving the mind of the public to finish it,
Since cut it ruefully short he must :
On the face alone he expends his devotion,
He rather would mar than resolve to diminish it,
—Saying, ‘ Applaud me for this grand notion
‘ Of what a face may be ! As for completing it
‘ In breast and body and limbs, do that, you ! ’
All hail ! I fancy how, happily meeting it,
A trunk and legs would perfect the statue,
Could man carve so as to answer volition.
And how much nobler than petty cavils,
Were a hope to find, in my spirit-travels,
Some artist of another ambition,
Who having a block to carve, no bigger,
Has spent his power on the opposite quest,
And believed to begin at the feet was best—
For so may I see, ere I die, the whole figure ! ”

XIII.

No sooner said than out in the night !
My heart beat lighter and more light :
And still, as before, I was walking swift,
With my senses settling fast and steadying,
But my body caught up in the whirl and drift
Of the vesture’s amplitude, still eddying
On just before me, still to be followed,

As it carried me after with its motion,
—What shall I say?—as a path were hollowed,
And a man went weltering through the ocean,
Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.

XIV.

Alone ! I am left alone once more—
(Save for the garment's extreme fold
Abandoned still to bless my hold)
Alone, beside the entrance-door
Of a sort of temple,—perhaps a college,
—Like nothing I ever saw before
At home in England, to my knowledge.
The tall old quaint irregular town !
It may be . . though which, I can't affirm . . any
Of the famous middle-age towns of Germany ;
And this flight of stairs where I sit down,
Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, Frankfort,
Or Göttingen, I have to thank for 't ?
It may be Göttingen,—most likely.
Through the open door I catch obliquely
Glimpses of a lecture-hall ;
And not a bad assembly neither,
Ranged decent and symmetrical
On benches, waiting what 's to see there ;
Which, holding still by the vesture's hem,
I also resolve to see with them,
Cautious this time how I suffer to slip

The chance of joining in fellowship
With any that call themselves his friends ;
As these folks do, I have a notion.
But hist—a buzzing and emotion !
All settle themselves, the while ascends
By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk,
Step by step, deliberate
Because of his cranium's over-freight,
Three parts sublime to one grotesque,
If I have proved an accurate guesser,
The hawk-nosed, high-cheek-boned Professor.
I felt at once as if there ran
A shoot of love from my heart to the man—
That sallow virgin-minded studious
Martyr to mild enthusiasm,
As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious
That woke my sympathetic spasm,
(Beside some spitting that made me sorry)
And stood, surveying his auditory
With a wan pure look, well nigh celestial,—
Those blue eyes had survived so much !
While, under the foot they could not smutch,
Lay all the fleshly and the bestial.
Over he bowed, and arranged his notes,
Till the auditory's clearing of throats
Was done with, died into a silence ;
And, when each glance was upward sent,
Each bearded mouth composed intent,
And a pin might be heard drop half a mile hence,—

He pushed back higher his spectacles,
Let the eyes stream out like lamps from cells,
And giving his head of hair—a hake
Of undressed tow, for colour and quantity—
One rapid and impatient shake,
(As our own young England adjusts a jaunty tie
When about to impart, on mature digestion,
Some thrilling view of the surplice-question)
—The Professor's grave voice, sweet though hoarse,
Broke into his Christmas-Eve discourse.

xv.

And he began it by observing
How reason dictated that men
Should rectify the natural swerving,
By a reversion, now and then,
To the well-heads of knowledge, few
And far away, whence rolling grew
The life-stream wide whereat we drink,
Conmingled, as we needs must think,
With waters alien to the source ;
To do which, aimed this eve's discourse ;
Since, where could be a fitter time
For tracing backward to its prime,
This Christianity, this lake,
This reservoir, whereat we slake,
From one or other bank, our thirst?
So, he proposed inquiring first
Into the various sources whence

This Myth of Christ is derivable ;
Demanding from the evidence,
(Since plainly no such life was liveable)
How these phenomena should class ?
Whether 't were best opine Christ was,
Or never was at all, or whether
He was and was not, both together—
It matters little for the name,
So the idea be left the same.
Only, for practical purpose' sake,
'T was obviously as well to take
The popular story,—understanding
How the ineptitude of the time,
And the penman's prejudice, expanding
Fact into fable fit for the clime,
Had, by slow and sure degrees, translated it
Into this myth, this Individuum,—
Which, when reason had strained and abated it
Of foreign matter, left, for residuum,
A Man !—a right true man, however,
Whose work was worthy a man's endeavour :
Work, that gave warrant almost sufficient
To his disciples, for rather believing
He was just omnipotent and omniscient,
As it gives to us, for as frankly receiving
His word, their tradition,—which, though it meant
Something entirely different
From all that those who only heard it,
In their simplicity thought and averred it,

Had yet a meaning quite as respectable :
For, among other doctrines delectable,
Was he not surely the first to insist on
The natural sovereignty of our race ?—
Here the lecturer came to a pausing-place.
And while his cough, like a drouthy piston,
Tried to dislodge the husk that grew to him,
I seized the occasion of bidding adieu to him,
The vesture still within my hand.

XVI.

I could interpret its command.
This time he would not bid me enter
The exhausted air-bell of the Critic.
Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic
When Papist struggles with Dissenter,
Impregnating its pristine clarity,
—One, by his daily fare's vulgarity,
Its gust of broken meat and garlic ;
—One, by his soul's too-much presuming
To turn the frankincense's fuming
And vapours of the candle starlike
Into the cloud her wings she buoys on.
Each, that thus sets the pure air seething,
May poison it for healthy breathing—
But the Critic leaves no air to poison ;
Pumps out with ruthless ingenuity
Atom by atom, and leaves you—vacuity.
Thus much of Christ, does he reject ?

And what retain ? His intellect ?
What is it I must reverence duly ?
Poor intellect for worship, truly,
Which tells me simply what was told
(If mere morality, bereft
Of the God in Christ, be all that 's left)
Elsewhere by voices manifold ;
With this advantage, that the stater
Made nowise the important stumble
Of adding, he, the sage and humble,
Was also one with the Creator.
You urge Christ's followers' simplicity :
But how does shifting blame, evade it ?
Have wisdom's words no more felicity ?
The stumbling-block, his speech—who laid it ?
How comes it that for one found able
To sift the truth of it from fable,
Millions believe it to the letter ?
Christ's goodness, then—does that fare better ?
Strange goodness, which upon the score
Of being goodness, the mere due
Of man to fellow-man, much more
To God,—should take another view
Of its possessor's privilege,
And bid him rule his race ! You pledge
Your fealty to such rule ? What, all—
From heavenly John and Attic Paul,
And that brave weather-battered Peter
Whose stout faith only stood completer

For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,
As, more his hands hauled nets, they hardened,—
All, down to you, the man of men,
Professing here at Göttingen,
Compose Christ's flock ! They, you and I,
Are sheep of a good man ! And why ?
The goodness,—how did he acquire it ?
Was it self-gained, did God inspire it ?
Choose which ; then tell me, on what ground
Should its possessor dare propound
His claim to rise o'er us an inch ?
Were goodness all some man's invention,
Who arbitrarily made mention
What we should follow. and whence flinch,—
What qualities might take the style
Of right and wrong,—and had such guessing
Met with as general acquiescing
As graced the alphabet erewhile,
When A got leave an Ox to be,
No Camel (quoth the Jews) like G,—
For thus inventing thing and title
Worship were that man's fit requital.
But if the common conscience must
Be ultimately judge, adjust
Its apt name to each quality
Already known,—I would decrec
Worship for such mere demonstration
And simple work of nomenclature,
Only the day I praised, not nature,

But Harvey, for the circulation.
I would praise such a Christ, with pride
And joy, that he, as none beside,
Had taught us how to keep the mind
God gave him, as God gave his kind,
Freer than they from fleshly taint :
I would call such a Christ our Saint,
As I declare our Poet, him
Whose insight makes all others dim :
A thousand poets pried at life,
And only one amid the strife
Rose to be Shakespeare : each shall take
His crown, I 'd say, for the world's sake—
Though some objected—" Had we seen
" The heart and head of each, what screen
" Was broken there to give them light,
" While in ourselves it shuts the sight,
" We should no more admire, perchance,
" That these found truth out at a glance,
" Than marvel how the bat discerns
" Some pitch-dark cavern's fifty turns,
" Led by a finer tact, a gift
" He boasts, which other birds must shift
" Without, and grope as best they can."
No, freely I would praise the man,—
Nor one whit more, if he contended
That gift of his, from God, descended.
Ah friend, what gift of man's does not ?
No nearer something, by a jot,

Rise an infinity of nothings
Than one : take Euclid for your teacher :
Distinguish kinds : do crownings, clothings,
Make that creator which was creature ?
Multiply gifts upon man's head,
And what, when all 's done, shall be said
But—the more gifted he, I ween !
'That one 's made Christ, this other, Pilate,
And this might be all that has been,—
So what is there to frown or smile at ?
What is left for us, save, in growth
Of soul, to rise up, far past both,
From the gift looking to the giver,
And from the cistern to the river,
And from the finite to infinity,
And from man's dust to God's divinity ?

XVII.

Take all in a word : the truth in God's breast
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed :
Though he is so bright and we so dim,
We are made in his image to witness him :
And were no eye in us to tell,
Instructed by no inner sense,
The light of heaven from the dark of hell,
That light would want its evidence,—
Though justice, good and truth were still
Divine, if, by some demon's will,
Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed

Law through the worlds, and right misnamed.
No mere exposition of morality
Made or in part or in totality,
Should win you to give it worship, therefore :
And, if no better proof you will care for,
—Whom do you count the worst man upon earth ?
Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
Of what right is, than arrives at birth
In the best man's acts that we bow before :
This last knows better—true, but my fact is,
'T is one thing to know, and another to practise.
And thence I conclude that the real God-function
Is to furnish a motive and injunction
For practising what we know already.
And such an injunction and such a motive
As the God in Christ, do you waive, and “ heady,
“ High-minded,” hang your tablet-votive
Outside the fane on a finger-post ?
Morality to the uttermost,
Supreme in Christ as we all confess,
Why need we prove would avail no jot
To make him God, if God he were not ?
What is the point where himself lays stress ?
Does the precept run “ Believe in good,
“ In justice, truth, now understood
“ For the first time ?”—or, “ Believe in me,
“ Who lived and died, yet essentially
“ Am Lord of Life ?” Whoever can take
The same to his heart and for mere love's sake

Conceive of the love,—that man obtains
A new truth ; no conviction gains
Of an old one only, made intense
By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

XVIII.

“ Can it be that he stays inside ?
Is the vesture left me to commune with ?
Could my soul find aught to sing in tune with
Even at this lecture, if she tried ?
Oh, let me at lowest sympathize
With the lurking drop of blood that lies
In the desiccated brain’s white roots
Without throb for Christ’s attributes,
As the lecturer makes his special boast !
If love ’s dead there, it has left a ghost.
Admire we, how from heart to brain
(Though to say so strike the doctors dumb)
One instinct rises and falls again,
Restoring the equilibrium.
And how when the Critic had done his best,
And the pearl of price, at reason’s test,
Lay dust and ashes levigable
On the Professor’s lecture-table,—
When we looked for the inference and monition
That our faith, reduced to such condition,
Be swept forthwith to its natural dust-hole,—
He bids us, when we least expect it,
Take back our faith,—if it be not just whole,

Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect it,
Which fact pays damage done rewardingly,
So, prize we our dust and ashes accordingly !
' Go home and venerate the myth
' I thus have experimented with—
' This man, continue to adore him'
' Rather than all who went before him,
' And all who ever followed after !'—
Surely for this I may praise you, my brother !
Will you take the praise in tears or laughter ?
That 's one point gained : can I compass another ?
Unlearned love was safe from spurning—
Can 't we respect your loveless learning ?
Let us at least give learning honour !
What laurels had we showered upon her,
Girding her loins up to perturb
Our theory of the Middle Verb ;
Or Turk-like brandishing a scimitar
O'er anapæsts in comic-trimeter ;
Or curing the halt and maimed ' Iketides,'
While we lounged on at our indebted ease :
Instead of which, a tricky demon
Sets her at Titus or Philemon !
When ignorance wags his ears of leather
And hates God's word, 't is altogether ;
Nor leaves he his congenial thistles
To go and browse on Paul's Epistles.
—And you, the audience, who might ravage
The world wide, enviably savage,

Nor heed the cry of the retriever,
More than Herr Heine (before his fever),—
I do not tell a lie so arrant
As say my passion's wings are furled up,
And, without plainest heavenly warrant,
I were ready and glad to give the world up—
But still, when you rub brow meticulous,
And ponder the profit of turning holy
If not for God's, for your own sake solely,
—God forbid I should find you ridiculous !
Deduce from this lecture all that eases you,
Nay, call yourselves, if the calling pleases you,
' Christians,'—abhor the deist's pravity,—
Go on, you shall no more move my gravity
Than, when I see boys ride a-cockhorse,
I find it in my heart to embarrass them
By hinting that their stick 's a mock horse,
And they really carry what they say carries them."

XIX.

So sat I talking with my mind.
I did not long to leave the door
And find a new church, as before,
But rather was quiet and inclined
To prolong and enjoy the gentle resting
From further tracking and trying and testing.
" This tolerance is a genial mood !"
(Said I, and a little pause ensued).
" One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and shelf,

And sees, each side, the good effects of it,
A value for religion's self,
A carelessness about the sects of it.
Let me enjoy my own conviction,
Not watch my neighbour's faith with fretfulness,
Still spying there some dereliction
Of truth, perversity, forgetfulness !
Better a mild indifferentism,
Teaching that both our faiths (though duller
His shine through a dull spirit's prism)
Originally had one colour !
Better pursue a pilgrimage
Through ancient and through modern times
To many peoples, various climes,
Where I may see saint, savage, sage
Fuse their respective creeds in one
Before the general Father's throne !"

xx.

—'T was the horrible storm began afresh !
The black night caught me in his mesh,
Whirled me up, and flung me prone.
I was left on the college-step alone.
I looked, and far there, ever fleeting
Far, far away, the receding gesture,
And looming of the lessening vesture !—
Swept forward from my stupid hand,
While I watched my foolish heart expand
In the lazy glow of benevolence,

O'er the various modes of man's belief.
I sprang up with fear's vehemence.
"Needs must there be one way, our chief
Best way of worship : let me strive
To find it, and when found, contrive
My fellows also take their share !
This constitutes my earthly care :
God's is above it and distinct.
For I, a man, with men am linked
And not a brute with brutes ; no gain
That I experience, must remain
Unshared : but should my best endeavour
To share it, fail—subsisteth ever
God's care above, and I exult
That God, by God's own ways occult,
May—doth, I will believe—bring back
All wanderers to a single track.
Meantime, I can but testify
God's care for me—no more, can I—
It is but for myself I know ;
The world rolls witnessing around me
Only to leave me as it found me ;
Men cry there, but my ear is slow :
Their races flourish or decay
—What boots it, while yon lucid way
Loaded with stars divides the vault ?
But soon my soul repairs its fault
When, sharpening sense's hebetude,
She turns on my own life ! So viewed,

No mere mote's-breadth but teems immense
With witnessings of providence :
And woe to me if when I look
Upon that record, the sole book
Unsealed to me, I take no heed
Of any warning that I read !
Have I been sure, this Christmas-Eve,
God's own hand did the rainbow weave,
Whereby the truth from heaven slid
Into my soul ?—I cannot bid
The world admit he stooped to heal
My soul, as if in a thunder-peal
Where one heard noise, and one saw flame,
I only knew he named my name :
But what is the world to me, for sorrow
Or joy in its censure, when to-morrow
It drops the remark, with just-turned head
Then, on again, ' That man is dead ?'
Yes, but for me—my name called,—drawn
As a conscript's lot from the lap's black yawn,
He has dipt into on a battle-dawn :
Bid out of life by a nod, a glance,—
Stumbling, mute-mazed, at nature's chance,—
With a rapid finger circled round,
Fixed to the first poor inch of ground
To fight from, where his foot was found ;
Whose ear but a minute since lay free
To the wide camp's buzz and gossipry—
Summoned, a solitary man,

To end his life where his life began,
From the safe glad rear, to the dreadful van !
Soul of mine, hadst thou caught and held
By the hem of the vesture !—”

XXI.

And I caught
At the flying robe, and unrepelled
Was lapped again in its folds full-fraught
With warmth and wonder and delight,
God's mercy being infinite.
For scarce had the words escaped my tongue,
When, at a passionate bound, I sprung
Out of the wandering world of rain,
Into the little chapel again.

XXII.

How else was I found there, bolt upright.
On my bench, as if I had never left it ?
—Never flung out on the common at night
Nor met the storm and wedge-like cleft it,
Seen the raree-show of Peter's successor,
Or the laboratory of the Professor !
For the Vision, that was true, I wist,
True as that heaven and earth exist.
There sat my friend, the yellow and tall,
With his neck and its wen in the selfsame place ;
Yet my nearest neighbour's cheek showed gall.
She had slid away a contemptuous space :

And the old fat woman, late so placable,
Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mistakable,
Of her milk of kindness turning rancid.
In short, a spectator might have fancied
That I had nodded betrayed by slumber,
Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly,
Through the heads of the sermon, nine in number,
And woke up now at the tenth and lastly.
But again, could such disgrace have happened ?
Each friend at my elbow had surely nudged it ;
And, as for the sermon, where did my nap end ?
Unless I heard it, could I have judged it ?
Could I report as I do at the close,
First, the preacher speaks through his nose :
Second, his gesture is too emphatic :
Thirdly, to waive what 's pedagogic,
The subject-matter itself lacks logic :
Fourthly, the English is ungrammatic.
Great news ! the preacher is found no Pascal,
Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task call
Of making square to a finite eye
The circle of infinity,
And find so all-but-just-succeeding !
Great news ! the sermon proves no reading
Where bee-like in the flowers I may bury me,
Like Taylor's the immortal Jeremy !
And now that I know the very worst of him,
What was it I thought to obtain at first of him ?
Ha ! Is God mocked, as he asks ?

Shall I take on me to change his tasks,
And dare, dispatched to a river-head
For a simple draught of the element,
Neglect the thing for which he sent,
And return with another thing instead?—
Saying, “Because the water found
“ Welling up from underground,
“ Is mingled with the taints of earth,
“ While thou, I know, dost laugh at dearth,
“ And couldst, at wink or word, convulse
“ The world with the leap of a river-pulse,—
“ Therefore I turned from the oozings muddy,
“ And bring thee a chalice I found, instead :
“ See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy !
“ One would suppose that the marble bled.
“ What matters the water ? A hope I have nursed :
“ The waterless cup will quench my thirst.”
—Better have knelt at the poorest stream
That trickles in pain from the straightest rift !
For the less or the more is all God’s gift,
Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam.
And here, is there water or not, to drink ?
I then, in ignorance and weakness,
Taking God’s help, have attained to think
My heart does best to receive in meekness
That mode of worship, as most to his mind,
Where earthly aids being cast behind,
His All in All appears serene
With the thinnest human veil between,

Letting the mystic lamps, the seven,
The many motions of his spirit,
Pass, as they list, to earth from heaven.
For the preacher's merit or demerit,
It were to be wished the flaws were fewer
In the earthen vessel, holding treasure,
Which lies as safe in a golden ewer ;
But the main thing is, does it hold good measure ?
Heaven soon sets right all other matters !—
Ask, else, these ruins of humanity,
This flesh worn out to rags and tatters,
This soul at struggle with insanity,
Who thence take comfort, can I doubt ?
Which an empire gained, were a loss without.
May it be mine ! And let us hope
That no worse blessing befall the Pope,
Turn'd sick at last of to-day's buffoonery,
Of posturings and petticoatings,
Beside his Bourbon bully's gloatings
In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery !
Nor may the Professor forego its peace
At Göttingen presently, when, in the dusk
Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should increase,
Prophesied of by that horrible husk—
When thicker and thicker the darkness fills
The world through his misty spectacles,
And he gropes for something more substantial
Than a fable, myth or personification,—
May Christ do for him what no mere man shall,

And stand confessed as the God of salvation !
Meantime, in the still recurring fear
Lest myself, at unawares, be found,
While attacking the choice of my neighbours round,
With none of my own made—I choose here !
The giving out of the hymn reclaims me ;
I have done : and if any blames me,
Thinking that merely to touch in brevity
The topics I dwell on, were unlawful,—
Or worse, that I trench, with undue levity,
On the bounds of the holy and the awful,—
I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,
And refer myself to THEE, instead of him,
Who head and heart alike discernest,
Looking below light speech we utter,
When frothy spume and frequent sputter
Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest !
May truth shine out, stand ever before us !
I put up pencil and join chorus
To Hepzibah Tune, without further apology,
The last five verses of the third section
Of the seventeenth hymn of Whitfield's Collection,
To conclude with the doxology.

EASTER-DAY.

I.

How very hard it is to be
A Christian ! Hard for you and me,
—Not the mere task of making real
That duty up to its ideal,
Effecting thus, complete and whole,
A purpose of the human soul—
For that is always hard to do ;
But hard, I mean, for me and you
To realize it, more or less,
With even the moderate success
Which commonly repays our strife
To carry out the aims of life.
“ This aim is greater,” you will say,
“ And so more arduous every way.”
—But the importance of their fruits
Still proves to man, in all pursuits,
Proportional encouragement.
“ Then, what if it be God’s intent
“ That labour to this one result
“ Should seem unduly difficult ?”
Ah, that ’s a question in the dark—

And the sole thing that I remark
Upon the difficulty, this ;
We do not see it where it is,
At the beginning of the race :
As we proceed, it shifts its place,
And where we looked for crowns to fall,
We find the tug 's to come,—that 's all.

II.

At first you say, “ The whole, or chief
“ Of difficulties, is belief.
“ Could I believe once thoroughly,
“ The rest were simple. What? Am I
“ An idiot, do you think,—a beast?
“ Prove to me, only that the least
“ Command of God is God's indeed,
“ And what injunction shall I need
“ To pay obedience? Death so nigh,
“ When time must end, eternity
“ Begin,—and cannot I compute,
“ Weigh loss and gain together, suit
“ My actions to the balance drawn,
“ And give my body to be sawn
“ Asunder, hacked in pieces, tied
“ To horses, stoned, burned, crucified,
“ Like any martyr of the list?
“ How gladly !—if I make acquist,
“ Through the brief minute's fierce annoy,
“ Of God's eternity of joy.”

III.

—And certainly you name the point
Whereon all turns : for could you joint
This flexile finite life once tight
Into the fixed and infinite,
You, safe inside, would spurn what 's out,
With carelessness enough, no doubt—
Would spurn mere life : but when time brings
To their next stage your reasonings,
Your eyes, late wide, begin to wink
Nor see the path so well, I think.

IV.

You say, " Faith may be, one agrees,
" A touchstone for God's purposes,
" Even as ourselves conceive of them.
" Could he acquit us or condemn
" For holding what no hand can loose,
" Rejecting when we can 't but choose?
" As well award the victor's wreath
" To whosoever should take breath
" Duly each minute while he lived—
" Grant heaven, because a man contrived
" To see its sunlight every day
" He walked forth on the public way.
" You must mix some uncertainty
" With faith, if you would have faith be.
" Why, what but faith, do we abhor

" And idolize each other for—
 " Faith in our evil or our good,
 " Which is or is not understood
 " Aright by those we love or those
 " We hate, thence called our friends or foes ?
 " Your mistress saw your spirit's grace,
 " When, turning from the ugly face,
 " I found belief in it too hard ;
 " And she and I have our reward.
 " —Yet here a doubt peeps : well for us
 " Weak beings, to go using thus
 " A touchstone for our little ends,
 " Trying with faith the foes and friends ;
 " —But God, bethink you ! I would fain
 " Conceive of the Creator's reign
 " As based upon exacter laws
 " Than creatures build up with applause.
 " In all God's acts—(as Plato cries
 " He doth)—he should geometrize.
 " Whence, I desiderate . . ."

v.

I see !

You would grow as a natural tree,
 Stand as a rock, soar up like fire.
 The world's so perfect and entire,
 Quite above faith, so right and fit !
 Go there, walk up and down in it !
 No. The creation travails, groans—

Contrive your music from its moans,
Without or let or hindrance, friend !
That 's an old story, and its end
As old—you come back (be sincere)
With every question you put here
(Here where there once was, and is still,
We think, a living oracle,
Whose answers you stand carping at)
This time flung back unanswered flat,—
Beside, perhaps, as many more
As those that drove you out before,
Now added, where was little need.
Questions impossible, indeed,
To us who sat still, all and each
Persuaded that our earth had speech,
Of God's, writ down, no matter if
In cursive type or hieroglyph,—
Which one fact freed us from the yoke
Of guessing why he never spoke.
You come back in no better plight
Than when you left us,—am I right ?

VI.

So, the old process, I conclude,
Goes on, the reasoning 's pursued
Further. You own, " 'T is well averred,
" A scientific faith 's absurd,
" —Frustrates the very end 't was meant
" To serve. So, I would rest content

‘ With a mere probability,
“ But, probable ; the chance must lie
“ Clear on one side,—lie all in rough,
“ So long as there be just enough
“ To pin my faith to, though it hap
“ Only at points : from gap to gap
“ One hangs up a huge curtain so,
“ Grandly, nor seeks to have it go
“ Foldless and flat along the wall.
“ What care I if some interval
“ Of life less plainly may depend
“ On God? I ’d hang there to the end ;
“ And thus I should not find it hard
“ To be a Christian and debarred
“ From trailing on the earth, till furled
“ Away by death.—Renounce the world!
“ Were that a mighty hardship? Plan
“ A pleasant life, and straight some man
“ Beside you, with, if he thought fit,
“ Abundant means to compass it,
“ Shall turn deliberate aside
“ To try and live as, if you tried
“ You clearly might, yet most despise.
“ One friend of mine wears out his eyes,
“ Slighting the stupid joys of sense,
“ In patient hope that, ten years hence,
“ ‘ Somewhat completer,’ he may say,
“ ‘ My list of *coleoptera* !’
“ While just the other who most laughs

“ At him, above all epitaphs
“ Aspires to have his tomb describe
“ Himself as sole among the tribe
“ Of snuffbox-fanciers, who possessed
“ A Grignon with the Regent's crest.
“ So that, subduing, as you want,
“ Whatever stands predominant
“ Among my earthly appetites
“ For tastes and smells and sounds and sights,
“ I shall be doing that alone,
“ To gain a palm-branch and a throne.
“ Which fifty people undertake
“ To do, and gladly, for the sake
“ Of giving a Semitic guess,
“ Or playing pawns at blindfold chess.”

VII.

Good : and the next thing is,—look round
For evidence enough ! ’T is found,
No doubt : as is your sort of mind,
So is your sort of search : you ’ll find
What you desire, and that ’s to be
A Christian. What says history ?
How comforting a point it were
To find some mummy-scrap declare
There lived a Moses ! Better still,
Prove Jonah’s whale translatable
Into some quicksand of the seas,

Isle, cavern, rock, or what you please,
That faith might clap her wings and crow
From such an eminence ! Or, no—
The human heart 's best ; you prefer
Making that prove the minister
To truth ; you probe its wants and needs,
And hopes and fears, then try what creeds
Meet these most aptly,—resolute
That faith plucks such substantial fruit
Wherever these two correspond,
She little needs to look beyond,
And puzzle out who Orpheus was,
Or Dionysius Zagrias.
You 'll find sufficient, as I say,
To satisfy you either way ;
You wanted to believe ; your pains
Are crowned—you do : and what remains ?
“ Renounce the world ! ”—Ah, were it done
By merely cutting one by one
Your limbs off, with your wise head last,
How easy were it !—how soon past,
If once in the believing mood !
“ Such is man's usual gratitude,
“ Such thanks to God do we return,
“ For not exacting that we spurn
“ A single gift of life, forego
“ One real gain,—only taste them so
“ With gravity and temperance,
“ That those mild virtues may enhance

“ Such pleasures, rather than abstract—
“ Last spice of which, will be the fact
“ Of love discerned in every gift ;
“ While, when the scene of life shall shift,
“ And the gay heart be taught to ache,
“ As sorrows and privations take
“ The place of joy,—the thing that seems
“ Mere misery, under human schemes,
“ Becomes, regarded by the light
“ Of love, as very near, or quite
“ As good a gift as joy before.
“ So plain is it that, all the more
“ God’s dispensation ’s merciful,
“ More pettishly we try and cull
“ Briers, thistles, from our private plot,
“ To mar God’s ground where thorns are not ! ”

VIII.

Do you say this, or I ?—Oh, you !
Then, what, my friend ?—(thus I pursue
Our parley)—you indeed opine
That the Eternal and Divine
Did, eighteen centuries ago,
In very truth . . . Enough ! you know
The all-stupendous tale,—that Birth,
That Life, that Death ! And all, the earth
Shuddered at,—all, the heavens grew black
Rather than see ; all, nature’s rack

And throe at dissolution's brink
Attested,—all took place, you think,
Only to give our joys a zest,
And prove our sorrows for the best ?
We differ, then ! Were I, still pale
And heartstruck at the dreadful tale,
Waiting to hear God's voice declare
What horror followed for my share,
As implicated in the deed,
Apart from other sins,—concede
That if he blacked out in a blot
My brief life's pleasantness, 't were not
So very disproportionate !
Or there might be another fate—
I certainly could understand
(If fancies were the thing in hand)
How God might save, at that day's price,
The impure in their impurities,
Give formal licence and complete
To choose the fair and pick the sweet.
But there be certain words, broad, plain,
Uttered again and yet again,
Hard to mistake or overgloss—
Announcing this world's gain for loss,
And bidding us reject the same :
'The whole world lieth (they proclaim)
In wickedness,—come out of it !
Turn a deaf ear, if you think fit,
But I who thrill through every nerve

At thought of what deaf ears deserve,—
How do you counsel in the case ?

IX.

“ I ’d take, by all means, in your place,
“ The safe side, since it so appears :
“ Deny myself, a few brief years,
“ The natural pleasure, leave the fruit
“ Or cut the plant up by the root.
“ Remember what a martyr said
“ On the rude tablet overhead !
“ ‘ I was born sickly, poor and mean,
“ ‘ A slave : no misery could screen
“ ‘ The holders of the pearl of price
“ ‘ From Cæsar’s envy ; therefore twice
“ ‘ I fought with beasts, and three times saw
“ ‘ My children suffer by his law ;
“ ‘ At last my own release was earned :
“ ‘ I was some time in being burned,
“ ‘ But at the close a Hand came through
“ ‘ The fire above my head, and drew
“ ‘ My soul to Christ, whom now I see.
“ ‘ Sergius, a brother, writes for me
“ ‘ This testimony on the wall—
“ ‘ For me, I have forgot it all.’
“ You say right ; this were not so hard !
“ And since one nowise is debarred
“ From this, why not escape some sins
“ By such a method ? ”

X.

Then begins
To the old point, revulsion new—
(For 't is just this, I bring you to)
If after all we should mistake,
And so renounce life for the sake
Of death and nothing else? You hear
Our friends we jeered at, send the jeer
Back to ourselves with good effect—
“ There were my beetles to collect !
“ My box—a trifle, I confess,
“ But here I hold it, ne'ertheless !”
Poor idiots, (let us pluck up heart
And answer) we, the better part
Have chosen, though 'twere only hope,—
Nor envy moles like you that grope
Amid your veritable muck,
More than the grasshoppers would truck,
For yours, their passionate life away,
That spends itself in leaps all day
To reach the sun, you want the eyes
To see, as they the wings to rise
And match the noble hearts of them !
Thus the contemner we condemn,—
And, when doubt strikes us, thus we ward
Its stroke off, caught upon our guard,
—Not struck enough to overturn
Our faith, but shake it—make us learn

What I began with, wot I wis,
 End, having proved,—how hard it is
 To be a Christian !

II.

Proved, or not,
 “ Howe’er you wis, wot thanks, I wot,
 “ You get of mine, retaking pains
 “ To make it hard time. Who gains
 “ By that, I wonder ? Here I live
 “ In trusting ease ; all here you drive
 “ At chasing me to be what most
 “ Yourself would wot for had you lost !”

III.

But, do you see, my friend, that thus
 You leave St. Paul Greek-Echylus ?
 —Who made his Trick’s arch-device
 The giving men *drinking* to spice
 The meal of life wot else devoured
 In bitter haste, whilom death loured
 Before them at the party’s edge !
 If faith should be, as allego,
 Quite other than a saliment
 To heighten flavour—tho, or meant
 (Like that brave cup of his Grace)
 To take at need the *Sentals*’ place ?
 If, having dined, you would digest
 Besides, and turning your rest
 Should find instead .

XII

Now, you shall see
 And judge if a mere fopery
 Pricks on my speaking! I resolve
 To utter—yes, it shall resolve
 On you to hear as solemn strange
 And dread a thing as in the range
 Of facts,—or fancies, if God will—
 E'er happened to our kind! I still
 Stand in the cloud and, while it wraps
 My face, ought not to speak perhaps;
 Seeing that if I carry through
 My purpose, if my word on you
 Find a live actual listener—
 My story, reason must say
 False after all—the happy chance!
 While, if each human countenance
 I meet in London day by day,
 Be what I fear,—my warnings fray
 No one, and no one they convert,
 And no one helps me to assert
 How hard it is to really be
 A Christian, and in vacancy
 I pour this story!

XIII

I commence
 By trying to inform you of the chance

What I began with, and, I wis,
End, having proved,—how hard it is
To be a Christian !

XI.

“ Proved, or not,
“ Howe’er you wis, small thanks, I wot,
“ You get of mine, for taking pains
“ To make it hard to me. Who gains
“ By that, I wonder ? Here I live
“ In trusting ease ; and here you drive
“ At causing me to lose what most
“ Yourself would mourn for had you lost ! ”

XII.

But, do you see, my friend, that thus
You leave St. Paul for Æschylus ?
—Who made his Titan’s arch-device
The giving men *blind hopes* to spice
The meal of life with, else devoured
In bitter haste, while lo, death loured
Before them at the platter’s edge !
If faith should be, as I allege,
Quite other than a condiment
To heighten flavours with, or meant
(Like that brave curry of his Grace)
To take at need the victuals’ place ?
If, having dined, you would digest
Besides, and turning to your rest
Should find instead . . .

XIII.

Now, you shall see

And judge if a mere foppery
Pricks on my speaking ! I resolve
To utter—yes, it shall devolve
On you to hear as solemn, strange
And dread a thing as in the range
Of facts,—or fancies, if God will—
E'er happened to our kind ! I still
Stand in the cloud and, while it wraps
My face, ought not to speak perhaps ;
Seeing that if I carry through
My purpose, if my words in you
Find a live actual listener,
My story, reason must aver
False after all—the happy chance !
While, if each human countenance
I meet in London day by day,
Be what I fear,—my warnings fray
No one, and no one they convert,
And no one helps me to assert
How hard it is to really be
A Christian, and in vacancy
I pour this story !

XIV.

I commence

By trying to inform you, whence

It comes that every Easter-night
As now, I sit up, watch, till light,
Upon those chimney-stacks and roofs,
Give, through my window-pane, grey proofs
That Easter-day is breaking slow.
On such a night three years ago,
It chanced that I had cause to cross
The common, where the chapel was,
Our friend spoke of, the other day—
You 've not forgotten, I dare say.
I fell to musing of the time
So close, the blessed matin-prime
All hearts leap up at, in some guise—
One could not well do otherwise.
Insensibly my thoughts were bent
Toward the main point ; I overwent
Much the same ground of reasoning
As you and I just now. One thing
Remained, however—one that tasked
My soul to answer ; and I asked,
Fairly and frankly, what might be
That History, that Faith, to me
—Me there—not me in some domain
Built up and peopled by my brain,
Weighing its merits as one weighs
Mere theories for blame or praise,
—The kingcraft of the Lucumons,
Or Fourier's scheme, its pros and cons,—
But my faith there, or none at all.

“ How were my case, now, did I fall
“ Dead here, this minute—should I lie
“ Faithful or faithless? ”—Note that I
Inclined thus ever !—little prone
For instance, when I lay alone
In childhood, to go calm to sleep
And leave a closet where might keep
His watch perdue some murderer
Waiting till twelve o’clock to stir,
As good authentic legends tell :
“ He might : but how improbable !
“ How little likely to deserve
“ The pains and trial to the nerve
“ Of thrusting head into the dark ! ”—
Urged my old nurse, and bade me mark
Beside, that, should the dreadful scout
Really lie hid there, and leap out
At first turn of the rusty key,
Mine were small gain that she could see,
Killed not in bed but on the floor,
And losing one night’s sleep the more.
I tell you, I would always burst
The door ope, know my fate at first.
This time, indeed, the closet penned
No such assassin : but a friend
Rather, peeped out to guard me, fit
For counsel, Common Sense, to wit,
Who said a good deal that might pass,—
Heartening, impartial too, it was,

Judge else : “ For, soberly now,—who
“ Should be a Christian if not you ? ”
(Hear how he smoothed me down.) “ One takes
“ A whole life, sees what course it makes
“ Mainly, and not by fits and starts—
“ In spite of stoppage which imparts
“ Fresh value to the general speed.
“ A life, with none, would fly indeed :
“ Your progressing is slower—right !
“ We deal with progress and not flight.
“ Through baffling senses passionate,
“ Fancies as restless,—with a freight
“ Of knowledge cumbersome enough
- “ To sink your ship when waves grow rough,
“ Though meant for ballast in the hold,—
“ I find, ’mid dangers manifold,
“ The good bark answers to the helm
“ Where faith sits, easier to o’erwhelm
“ Than some stout peasant’s heavenly guide,
“ Whose hard head could not, if it tried,
“ Conceive a doubt, nor understand
“ How senses hornier than his hand
“ Should tice the Christian off his guard.
“ More happy ! But shall we award
“ Less honour to the hull which, dogged
“ By storms, a mere wreck, waterlogged,
“ Masts by the board, her bulwarks gone
“ And stanchions going, yet bears on,—
“ Than to mere life-boats, built to save,

“ And triumph o’er the breaking wave ?
“ Make perfect your good ship as these,
“ And what were her performances ! ”
I added—“ Would the ship reach home !
“ I wish indeed ‘ God’s kingdom come—’
“ The day when I shall see appear
“ His bidding, as my duty, clear
“ From doubt ! And it shall dawn, that day,
“ Some future season ; Easter may
“ Prove, not impossibly, the time—
“ Yes, that were striking—fates would chime
“ So aptly ! Easter-morn, to bring
“ The Judgment !—deeper in the spring
“ Than now, however, when there’s snow
“ Capping the hills ; for earth must show
“ All signs of meaning to pursue
“ Her tasks as she was wont to do
“ —The skylark, taken by surprise
“ As we ourselves, shall recognize
“ Sudden the end. For suddenly
“ It comes ; the dreadful must be
“ In that ; all warrants the belief—
“ ‘ At night it cometh like a thief.’
“ I fancy why the trumpet blows ;
“ —Plainly, to wake one. From repose
“ We shall start up, at last awake
“ From life, that insane dream we take
“ For waking now, because it seems.
“ And as, when now we wake from dreams,

“ We laugh, while we recall them, ‘Fool,
“ ‘To let the chance slip, linger cool
“ ‘When such adventure offered ! Just
“ ‘A bridge to cross, a dwarf to thrust
“ ‘Aside, a wicked mage to stab—
“ ‘And, lo ye, I had kissed Queen Mab !’
“ So shall we marvel why we grudged
“ Our labour here, and idly judged
“ Of heaven, we might have gained, but lose !
“ Lose ? Talk of loss, and I refuse
“ To plead at all ! You speak no worse
“ Nor better than my ancient nurse
“ When she would tell me in my youth
“ I well deserved that shapes uncouth
“ Frighted and teased me in my sleep :
“ Why could I not in memory keep
“ Her precept for the evil’s cure ?
“ ‘ Pinch your own arm, boy, and be sure
“ ‘ You ’ll wake forthwith ! ’ ”

xv.

And as I said
This nonsense, throwing back my head
With light complacent laugh, I found
Suddenly all the midnight round
One fire. The dome of heaven had stood
As made up of a multitude
Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack
Of ripples infinite and black,

From sky to sky. Sudden there went,
Like horror and astonishment,
A fierce vindictive scribble of red
Quick flame across, as if one said
(The angry scribe of Judgment) "There—
"Burn it!" And straight I was aware
That the whole ribwork round, minute
Cloud touching cloud beyond compute,
Was tinted, each with its own spot
Of burning at the core, till clot
Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire
Over all heaven, which 'gan suspire
As fanned to measure equable,—
Just so great conflagrations kill
Night overhead, and rise and sink,
Reflected. Now the fire would shrink
And wither off the blasted face
Of heaven, and I distinct might trace
The sharp black ridgy outlines left
Unburned like network—then, each cleft
The fire had been sucked back into,
Regorged, and out it surging flew
Furiously, and night writhed inflamed,
Till, tolerating to be tamed
No longer, certain rays world-wide
Shot downwardly. On every side
Caught past escape, the earth was lit;
As if a dragon's nostril split
And all his famished ire o'erflowed;

Then as he winced at his lord's goad,
Back he inhaled : whereat I found
The clouds into vast pillars bound,
Based on the corners of the earth,
Propping the skies at top : a dearth
Of fire i' the violet intervals,
Leaving exposed the utmost walls
Of time, about to tumble in
And end the world.

XVI.

I felt begin
The Judgment-Day : to retrocede
Was too late now. " In very deed,"
(I uttered to myself) " that Day ! "
The intuition burned away
All darkness from my spirit too :
There, stood I, found and fixed, I knew,
Choosing the world. The choice was made ;
And naked and disguiseless stayed,
And unevadable, the fact.
My brain held ne'ertheless compact
Its senses, nor my heart declined
Its office ; rather, both combined
To help me in this juncture. I
Lost not a second,—agony
Gave boldness : since my life had end
And my choice with it—best defend,
Applaud both ! I resolved to say,

“ So was I framed by thee, such way
“ I put to use thy senses here !
“ It was so beautiful, so near,
“ Thy world,—what could I then but choose
“ My part there ? Nor did I refuse
“ To look above the transient boon
“ Of time ; but it was hard so soon
“ As in a short life, to give up
“ Such beauty : I could put the cup
“ Undrained of half its fulness, by ;
“ But, to renounce it utterly,
“ —That was too hard ! Nor did the cry
“ Which bade renounce it, touch my brain
“ Authentically deep and plain
“ Enough to make my lips let go.
“ But thou, who knowest all, dost know
“ Whether I was not, life’s brief while,
“ Endeavouring to reconcile -
“ Those lips (too tardily, alas !)
“ To letting the dear remnant pass,
“ One day,—some drops of earthly good
“ Untasted ! Is it for this mood,
“ That thou, whose earth delights so well,
“ Hast made its complement a heli ? ”

XVII.

A final belch of fire-like blood,
Overbroke all heaven in one flood
Of doom. Then fire was sky, and sky

Fire, and both, one brief ecstasy,
Then ashes. But I heard no noise
(Whatever was) because a voice
Beside me spoke thus, "Life is done,
"Time ends, Eternity's begun,
"And thou art judged for evermore."

XVIII.

I looked up ; all seemed as before ;
Of that cloud-Tophet overhead,
No trace was left : I saw instead
The common round me, and the sky
Above, stretched drear and emptily
Of life. 'T was the last watch of night,
Except what brings the morning quite ;
When the armed angel, conscience-clear,
His task nigh done, leans o'er his spear
And gazes on the earth he guards,
Safe one night more through all its wards,
Till God relieve him at his post.
"A dream—a waking dream at most !"
(I spoke out quick, that I might shake
The horrid nightmare off, and wake.)
"The world gone, yet the world is here ?
"Are not all things as they appear ?
"Is Judgment past for me alone ?
"—And where had place the great white throne ?
"The rising of the quick and dead ?
"Where stood they, small and great ? Who read

"The sentence from the opened book?"

So, by degrees, the blood forsook
My heart, and let it beat afresh;
I knew I should break through the mesh
Of horror, and breathe presently:
When, lo, again, the voice by me!

XIX.

I saw . . . Oh brother, 'mid far sands
The palm-tree-cinctured city stands,
Bright-white beneath, as heaven, bright-blue,
Leans o'er it, while the years pursue
Their course, unable to abate
Its paradisal laugh at fate!
One morn,—the Arab staggers blind
O'er a new tract of death, calcined
To ashes, silence, nothingness,—
And strives, with dizzy wits, to guess
Whence fell the blow. What if, 'twixt skies
And prostrate earth, he should surprise
The imaged vapour, head to foot,
Surveying, motionless and mute,
Its work, ere, in a whirlwind rapt
It vanish up again?—So hapt
My chance. HE stood there. Like the smoke
Pillared o'er Sodom, when day broke,—
I saw him. One magnific pall
Mantled in massive fold and fall
His dread, and coiled in snaky swathes

About his feet : night's black, that bathes
All else, broke, grizzled with despair,
Against the soul of blackness there.
A gesture told the mood within—
That wrapped right hand which based the chin,
That intense meditation fixed
On his procedure,—pity mixed
With the fulfilment of decree.
Motionless, thus, he spoke to me,
Who fell before his feet, a mass,
No man now.

XX

“ All is come to pass.
“ Such shows are over for each soul
“ They had respect to. In the roll
“ Of Judgment which convinced mankind
“ Of sin, stood many, bold and blind,
“ Terror must burn the truth into :
“ Their fate for them !—thou hadst to do
“ With absolute omnipotence,
“ Able its judgments to dispense
“ To the whole race, as every one
“ Were its sole object. Judgment done,
“ God is, thou art,—the rest is hurled
“ To nothingness for thee. This world,
“ This finite life, thou hast preferred,
“ In disbelief of God's own word,
“ To heaven and to infinity.

“ Here the probation was for thee,
“ To show thy soul the earthly mixed
“ With heavenly, it must choose betwixt.
“ The earthly joys lay palpable,—
“ A taint, in each, distinct as well ;
“ The heavenly flitted, faint and rare,
“ Above them, but as truly were
“ Taintless, so, in their nature, best.
“ Thy choice was earth : thou didst attest
“ ’T was fitter spirit should subserve
“ The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve
“ Beneath the spirit’s play. Advance
“ No claim to their inheritance
“ Who chose the spirit’s fugitive
“ Brief gleams, and yearned, ‘ This were to live
“ ‘ Indeed, if rays, completely pure
“ ‘ From flesh that dulls them, could endure,—
“ ‘ Not shoot in meteor-light athwart
“ ‘ Our earth, to show how cold and swart
“ ‘ It lies beneath their fire, but stand
“ ‘ As stars do, destined to expand,
“ ‘ Prove veritable worlds, our home !’
“ Thou saidst,—‘ Let spirit star the dome
“ ‘ Of sky, that flesh may miss no peak,
“ ‘ No nook of earth,—I shall not seek
“ ‘ Its service further !’ Thou art shut
“ Out of the heaven of spirit ; glut
“ Thy sense upon the world : ’t is thine
“ For ever—take it !”

XXI.

“How? Is mine,
“The world?” (I cried, while my soul broke
Out in a transport.) “Hast thou spoke
“Plainly in that? Earth’s exquisite
“Treasures of wonder and delight,
“For me?”

XXII.

The austere voice returned, —
“So soon made happy? Hadst thou learned
“What God accounteth happiness,
“Thou wouldst not find it hard to guess
“What hell may be his punishment
“For those who doubt if God invent
“Better than they. Let such men rest
“Content with what they judged the best.
“Let the unjust usurp at will :
“The filthy shall be filthy still :
“Miser, there waits the gold for thee !
“Hater, indulge thine enmity !
“And thou, whose heaven self-ordained
“Was, to enjoy earth unrestrained,
“Do it ! Take all the ancient show !
“The woods shall wave, the rivers flow,
“And men apparently pursue
“Their works, as they were wont to do,
“While living in probation yet.

“ I promise not thou shalt forget
“ The past, now gone to its account ;
“ But leave thee with the old amount
“ Of faculties, nor less nor more,
“ Unvisited, as heretofore,
“ By God’s free spirit, that makes an end.
“ So, once more, take thy world ! Expend
“ Eternity upon its shows,
“ Flung thee as freely as one rose
“ Out of a summer’s opulence,
“ Over the Eden-barrier whence
“ Thou art excluded. Knock in vain ! ”

XXIII.

I sat up. All was still again.
I breathed free : to my heart, back fled
The warmth. “ But, all the world ! ”—I said.
I stooped and picked a leaf of fern,
And recollected I might learn
From books, how many myriad sorts
Of fern exist, to trust reports,
Each as distinct and beautiful
As this, the very first I cull.
Think, from the first leaf to the last !
Conceive, then, earth’s resources ! Vast
Exhaustless beauty, endless change
Of wonder ! And this foot shall range
Alps, Andes,—and this eye devour
The bee-bird and the aloe-flower ?

XXIV.

Then the voice, "Welcome so to rate
" The arras-folds that variegate
" The earth, God's antechamber, well !
" The wise, who waited there, could tell
" By these, what royalties in store
" Lay one step past the entrance-door.
" For whom, was reckoned, not too much,
" This life's munificence ? For such
" As thou,—a race, whereof scarce one
" Was able, in a million,
" To feel that any marvel lay
" In objects round his feet all day ;
" Scarce one, in many millions more,
" Willing, if able, to explore
" The secreter, minuter charm !
" —Brave souls, a fern-leaf could disarm
" Of power to cope with God's intent,—
" Or scared if the south firmament
" With north-fire did its wings reflodge !
" All partial beauty was a pledge
" Of beauty in its plenitude :
" But since the pledge sufficed thy mood,
" Retain it ! plenitude be theirs
" Who looked above !"

XXV.

Though sharp despairs
Shot through me, I held up, bore on.

“ What matter though my trust were gone
“ From natural things? Henceforth my part
“ Be less with nature than with art!
“ For art supplants, gives mainly worth
“ To nature; ’t is man stamps the earth—
“ And I will seek his impress, seek
“ The statuary of the Greek,
“ Italy’s painting—there my choice
“ Shall fix!”

XXVI.

“ Obtain it!” said the voice,
“ —The one form with its single act,
“ Which sculptors laboured to abstract,
“ The one face, painters tried to draw,
“ With its one look, from throngs they saw.
“ And that perfection in their soul,
“ These only hinted at? The whole,
“ They were but parts of? What each laid
“ His claim to glory on?—afraid
“ His fellow-men should give him rank
“ By the poor tentatives he shrank
“ Smitten at heart from, all the more,
“ That gazers pressed in to adore!
“ ‘Shall I be judged by only these?’
“ If such his soul’s capacities,
“ Even while he trod the earth,—think, now,
“ What pomp in Buonarroti’s brow,
“ With its new palace-brain where dwells
“ Superb the soul, unvexed by cells

“ That crumbled with the transient clay !
“ What visions will his right hand’s sway
“ Still turn to form, as still they burst
“ Upon him? How will he quench thirst,
“ Titanically infantine,
“ Laid at the breast of the Divine ?
“ Does it confound thee,—this first page
“ Emblazoning man’s heritage ?—
“ Can this alone absorb thy sight,
“ As pages were not infinite,—
“ Like the omnipotence which tasks
“ Itself, to furnish all that asks
“ The soul it means to satiate ?
“ What was the world, the starry state
“ Of the broad skies,—what, all displays
“ Of power and beauty intermixed,
“ Which now thy soul is chained betwixt,—
“ What else than needful furniture
“ For life’s first stage? God’s work, be sure,
“ No more spreads wasted, than falls scant !
“ He filled, did not exceed, man’s want
“ Of beauty in this life. But through
“ Life pierce,—and what has earth to do,
“ Its utmost beauty’s appanage,
“ With the requirement of next stage ?
“ Did God pronounce earth ‘ very good ?’
“ Needs must it be, while understood
“ For man’s preparatory state ;
“ Nothing to heighten nor abate :

‘ Transfer the same completeness here,
“ To serve a new state’s use,—and drear
“ Deficiency gapes every side !
“ The good, tried once, were bad, retried.
“ See the enwrapping rocky niche,
“ Sufficient for the sleep, in which
“ The lizard breathes for ages safe :
“ Split the mould—and as this would chafe
“ The creature’s new world-widened sense,
“ One minute after day dispense
“ The thousand sounds and sights that broke
“ In on him at the chisel’s stroke,—
“ So, in God’s eye, the earth’s first stuff
“ Was, neither more nor less, enough
“ To house man’s soul, man’s need fulfil.
“ Man reckoned it immeasurable ?
“ So thinks the lizard of his vault !
“ Could God be taken in default,
“ Short of contrivances, by you,—
“ Or reached, ere ready to pursue
“ His progress through eternity ?
“ That chambered rock, the lizard’s world,
“ Your easy mallet’s blow has hurled
“ To nothingness for ever ; so,
“ Has God abolished at a blow
“ This world, wherein his saints were pent,—
“ Who, though found grateful and content,
“ With the provision there, as thou,
“ Yet knew he would not disallow

“ Their spirit’s hunger, felt as well,—
“ Unsated,—not unsatable,
“ As paradise gives proof. Deride
“ Their choice now, thou who sit’st outside ! ”

XXVII.

I cried in anguish, “ Mind, the mind,
“ So miserably cast behind,
“ To gain what had been wisely lost !
“ Oh, let me strive to make the most
“ Of the poor stinted soul, I nipped
“ Of budding wings, else now equipped
“ For voyage from summer isle to isle !
“ And though she needs must reconcile
“ Ambition to the life on ground,
“ Still, I can profit by late found
“ But precious knowledge. Mind is best—
“ I will seize mind, forego the rest,
“ And try how far my tethered strength
“ May crawl in this poor breadth and length.
“ Let me, since I can fly no more,
“ At least spin dervish-like about
“ (Till giddy rapture almost doubt
“ I fly) through circling sciences,
“ Philosophies and histories !
“ Should the whirl slacken there, then verse,
“ Fining to music, shall asperse
“ Fresh and fresh fire-dew, till I strain
“ Intoxicate, half-break my chain !

“ Not joyless, though more favoured feet
“ Stand calm, where I want wings to beat
“ The floor. At least earth’s bond is broke ! ’

XXVIII.

Then, (sickening even while I spoke)
“ Let me alone ! No answer, pray,
“ To this ! I know what thou wilt say !
“ All still is earth’s,—to know, as much
“ As feel its truths, which if we touch
“ With sense, or apprehend in soul,
“ What matter ? I have reached the goal—
“ ‘ Whereto does knowledge serve ! ’ will burn
“ My eyes, too sure, at every turn !
“ I cannot look back now, nor stake
“ Bliss on the race, for running’s sake.
“ The goal ’s a ruin like the rest !—
“ And so much worse thy latter quest,”
(Added the voice) “ that even on earth—
“ Whenever, in man’s soul, had birth
“ Those intuitions, grasps of guess,
“ That pull the more into the less,
“ Making the finite comprehend
“ Infinity,—the bard would spend
“ Such praise alone, upon his craft,
“ As, when wind-lyres obey the waft,
“ Goes to the craftsman who arranged
“ The seven strings, changed them and rechanged—
“ Knowing it was the South that harped.

“ He felt his song, in singing, warped ;
“ Distinguished his and God’s part : whence
“ A world of spirit as of sense
“ Was plain to him, yet not too plain,
“ Which he could traverse, not remain
“ A guest in :—else were permanent
“ Heaven on earth which its gleams were meant
“ To sting with hunger for full light,—
“ Made visible in verse, despite
“ The veiling weakness,—truth by means
“ Of fable, showing while it screens,—
“ Since highest truth, man e’er supplied,
“ Was ever fable on outside.
“ Such gleams made bright the earth an age ;
“ Now, the whole sun ’s his heritage !
“ Take up thy world, it is allowed,
“ Thou who hast entered in the cloud !”

XXIX.

Then I—“ Behold, my spirit bleeds,
“ Catches no more at broken reeds,—
“ But lilies flower those reeds above :
“ I let the world go, and take love !
“ Love survives in me, albeit those
“ I love be henceforth masks and shows,
“ Not loving men and women : still
“ I mind how love repaired all ill,
“ Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth amends
“ With parents, brothers, children, friends !

“ Some semblance of a woman yet
“ With eyes to help me to forget,
“ Shall live with me ; and I will match
“ Departed love with love, attach
“ Its fragments to my whole, nor scorn
“ The poorest of the grains of corn
“ I save from shipwreck on this isle,
“ Trusting its barrenness may smile
“ With happy foodful green one day,
“ More precious for the pains. I pray,
“ For love, then, only ! ”

xxx.

At the word,
The form, I looked to have been stirred
With pity and approval, rose
O'er me, as when the headsman throws
Axe over shoulder to make end—
I fell prone, letting him expend
His wrath, while thus the inflicting voice
Smote me. “ Is this thy final choice ?
“ Love is the best ? ’T is somewhat late !
“ And all thou dost enumerate
“ Of power and beauty in the world,
“ The mightiness of love was curled
“ Inextricably round about.
“ Love lay within it and without,
“ To clasp thee,—but in vain ! Thy soul
“ Still shrunk from him who made the whole,

“ Still set deliberate aside
“ His love !—Now take love ! Wel betide
“ Thy tardy conscience ! Haste to take
“ The show of love for the name’s sake,
“ Remembering every moment Who
“ Beside creating thee unto
“ These ends, and these for thee, was said
“ To undergo death in thy stead
“ In flesh like thine : so ran the tale.
“ What doubt in thee could countervail
“ Belief in it ? Upon the ground
“ ‘ That in the story had been found
“ ‘ Too much love ! How could God love so ?’
“ He who in all his works below
“ Adapted to the needs of man,
“ Made love the basis of the plan,—
“ Did love, as was demonstrated :
“ While man, who was so fit instead
“ To hate, as every day gave proof,—
“ Man thought man, for his kind’s behoof,
“ Both could and did invent that scheme
“ Of perfect love : ’t would well beseem
“ Cain’s nature thou wast wont to praise,
“ Not tally with God’s usual ways !”

XXXI.

And I cowered deprecatingly—
“ Thou Love of God ! Or let me die,
“ Or grant what shall seem heaven almost !

“ Let me not know that all is lost,
“ Though lost it be—leave me not tied
“ To this despair, this corpse-like bride !
“ Let that old life seem mine—no more—
“ With limitation as before,
“ With darkness, hunger, toil, distress :
“ Be all the earth a wilderness !
“ Only let me go on, go on,
“ Still hoping ever and anon
“ To reach one eve the Better Land !”

XXXII.

Then did the form expand, expand—
I knew him through the dread disguise
As the whole God within his eyes
Embraced me.

XXXIII.

When I lived again,
The day was breaking,—the grey plain
I rose from, silvered thick with dew.
Was this a vision? False or true?
Since then, three varied years are spent,
And commonly my mind is bent
To think it was a dream—be sure
A mere dream and distemperature—
The last day's watching : then the night,—
The shock of that strange Northern Light
Set my head swimming, bred in me
A dream. And so I live, you see,

Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
Prefer, still struggling to effect
My warfare ; happy that I can
Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
Not left in God's contempt apart,
With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.
Thank God, she still each method tries
To catch me, who may yet escape,
She knows, the fiend in angel's shape !
Thank God, no paradise stands barred
To entry, and I find it hard
To be a Christian, as I said !
Still every now and then my head
Raised glad, sinks mournful—all grows drear
Spite of the sunshine, while I fear
And think, "How dreadful to be grudged
" No ease henceforth, as one that 's judged,
" Condemned to earth for ever, shut
" From heaven ! "

But Easter-Day breaks ! But
Christ rises ! Mercy every way
Is infinite,—and who can say ?

MEN AND WOMEN.

LONDON AND FLORENCE, 184— 185—.

MEN AND WOMEN.

“TRANSCENDENTALISM: A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS.”

STOP playing, poet ! May a brother speak ?
'T is you speak, that 's your error. Song 's our art :
Whereas you please to speak these naked thoughts
Instead of draping them in sights and sounds.
—True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to treasure up !

But why such long prolusion and display,
Such turning and adjustment of the harp,
And taking it upon your breast, at length,
Only to speak dry words across its strings ?
Stark-naked thought is in request enough :
Speak prose and hollo it till Europe hears !
The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,
Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp to Alp—
Exchange our harp for that,—who hinders you ?

But here 's your fault ; grown men want thought, you
think ;
Thought 's what they mean by verse, and seek in verse :
Boys seek for images and melody,
Men must have reason—so, you aim at men.
Quite otherwise ! Objects throng our youth, 't is true ;
We see and hear and do not wonder much :
If you could tell us what they mean, indeed !
As German Bœhme never cared for plants
Until it happed, a-walking in the fields,
He noticed all at once that plants could speak,
Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him.
That day the daisy had an eye indeed—
Colloquised with the cowslip on such themes !
We find them extant yet in Jacob's prose.
But by the time youth slips a stage or two
While reading prose in that tough book he wrote,
(Collating and emendating the same
And settling on the sense most to our mind)
We shut the clasps and find life's summer past.
'Then, who helps more, pray, to repair our loss—
Another Bœhme with a tougher book
And subtler meanings of what roses say,—
Or some stout Mage like him of Halberstadt,
John, who made things Bœhme wrote thoughts about ?
He with a "look you !" vents a brace of rhymes,
And in there breaks the sudden rose herself,
Over us, under, round us every side,
Nay, in and out the tables and the chairs

And musty volumes, Boehme's book and all,—
Buries us with a glory, young once more,
Pouring heaven into this shut house of life.

So come, the harp back to your heart again !
You are a poem, though your poem 's naught.
The best of all you showed before, believe,
Was your own boy-face o'er the finer chords
Bent, following the cherub at the top
That points to God with his paired half-moon wings.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY.

I ONLY knew one poet in my life :
And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,
A man of mark, to know next time you saw.
His very serviceable suit of black
Was courtly once and conscientious still,
And many might have worn it, though none did :
The cloak, that somewhat shone and showed the threads,
Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.
He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane,
Scenting the world, looking it full in face,
An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels.
They turned up, now, the alley by the church,

That leads no whither ; now, they breathed themselves
On the main promenade just at the wrong time :
You 'd come upon his scrutinizing hat,
Making a peaked shade blacker than itself
Against the single window spared some house
Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work,—
Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick
Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks
Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.
He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,
The man who slices lemons into drink,
The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys
That volunteer to help him turn its winch.
He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,
And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.
He took such cognisance of men and things,
If any beat a horse, you felt he saw ;
If any cursed a woman, he took note ;
Yet stared at nobody,—you stared at him,
And found, less to your pleasure than surprise,
He seemed to know you and expect as much.
So, next time that a neighbour's tongue was loosed,
It marked the shameful and notorious fact,
We had among us, not so much a spy,
As a recording chief-inquisitor,
The town's true master if the town but knew !
We merely kept a governor for form,
While this man walked about and took account

Of all thought, said and acted, then went home,
And wrote it fully to our Lord the King
Who has an itch to know things, he knows why,
And reads them in his bed-room of a night.
Oh, you might smile ! there wanted not a touch,
A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease
As back into your mind the man's look came—
Stricken in years a little,—such a brow
His eyes had to live under !—clear as flint
On either side the formidable nose
Curved, cut and coloured like an eagle's claw.
Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate ?
When altogether old B. disappeared
And young C. got his mistress,—was 't our friend,
His letter to the King, that did it all ?
What paid the bloodless man for so much pains ?
Our Lord the King has favourites manifold,
And shifts his ministry some once a month ;
Our city gets new governors at whiles,—
But never word or sign, that I could hear,
Notified to this man about the streets :
The King's approval of those letters conned
The last thing duly at the dead of night.
Did the man love his office ? Frowned our Lord,
Exhorting when none heard—" Beseech me not !
" 'Too far above my people,—beneath me !
" I set the watch,—how should the people know ?
" Forget them, keep me all the more in mind !"
Was some such understanding 'twixt the two ?

I found no truth in one report at least—
That if you tracked him to his home, down lanes
Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace,
You found he ate his supper in a room
Blazing with lights, four Titians on the wall,
And twenty naked girls to change his plate !
Poor man, he lived another kind of life
In that new stuccoed third house by the bridge,
Fresh-painted, rather smart than otherwise !
The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat,
Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back,
Playing a decent cribbage with his maid
(Jacynth, you 're sure her name was) o'er the cheese
And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears,
Or treat of radishes in April. Nine,
Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he was,
Would point him out to me a dozen times ;
“ St—St,” he 'd whisper, “ the Corregidor ! ”
I had been used to think that personage
Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt,
And feathers like a forest in his hat,
Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news,
Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn,
And memorized the miracle in vogue !
He had a great observance from us boys ;
We were in error ; that was not the man.

I 'd like now, yet had haply been afraid,
To have just looked, when this man came to die,
And seen who lined the clean gay garret sides
And stood about the neat low truckle-bed,
With the heavenly manner of relieving guard.
Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief,
Thro' a whole campaign of the world's life and death,
Doing the King's work all the dim day long,
In his old coat and up to knees in mud,
Smoked liked a herring, dining on a crust,—
And, now the day was won, relieved at once !
No further show or need for that old coat,
You are sure, for one thing ! Bless us, all the while
How sprucely we are dressed out, you and I !
A second, and the angels alter that.
Well, I could never write a verse,—could you ?
Let 's to the Prado and make the most of time.

ARTEMIS PROLOGIZES.

I AM a goddess of the ambrosial courts,
And save by Here, Queen of Pride, surpassed
By none whose temples whiten this the world.
Through heaven I roll my lucid moon along ;
I shed in hell o'er my pale people peace ;
On earth I, caring for the creatures, guard
Each pregnant yellow wolf and fox-bitch sleek,

And every feathered mother's callow brood,
And all that love green haunts and loneliness.
Of men, the chaste adore me, hanging crowns
Of poppies red to blackness, bell and stem,
Upon my image at Athenai here ;
And this dead Youth, Asclepios bends above,
Was dearest to me. He, my buskined step
To follow through the wild-wood leafy ways,
And chase the panting stag, or swift with darts
Stop the swift ounce, or lay the leopard low,
Neglected homage to another god :
Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight smoke
Of tapers lulled, in jealousy despatched
A noisome lust that, as the gadbee stings,
Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for himself
The son of Theseus her great absent spouse.
Hippolotos exclaiming in his rage
Against the fury of the Queen, she judged
Life insupportable ; and, pricked at heart
An Amazonian stranger's race should dare
To scorn her, perished by the murderous cord :
Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll
The fame of him her swerving mad^e not swerve.
And Theseus, read, returning, and believed,
And exiled, in the blindness of his wrath,
The man without a crime who, last as first,
Loyal, divulged not to his sire the truth.
Now Theseus from Poseidon had obtained
That of his wishes should be granted three,

And one he imprecated straight—"Alive
" May ne'er Hippolutos reach other lands !"
Poseidon heard, ai ai ! And scarce the prince
Had stepped into the fixed boots of the car
That give the feet a stay against the strength
Of the Henetian horses, and around
His body flung the rein, and urged their speed
Along the rocks and shingles of the shore,
When from the gaping wave a monster flung
His obscene body in the coursers' path.
These, mad with terror, as the sea-bull sprawled
Wallowing about their feet, lost care of him
That reared them ; and the master-chariot-pole
Snapping beneath their plunges like a reed,
Hippolutos, whose feet were trammelled fast,
Was yet dragged forward by the circling rein
Which either hand directed ; nor they quenched
The frenzy of their flight before each trace,
Wheel-spoke and splinter of the woeful car,
Each boulder-stone, sharp stub and spiny shell,
Huge fish-bone wrecked and wreathed amid the sands
On that detested beach, was bright with blood
And morsels of his flesh : then fell the steeds
Head-foremost, crashing in their mooned fronts,
Shivering with sweat, each white eye horror-fixed.
His people, who had witnessed all afar,
Bore back the ruins of Hippolutos.
But when his sire, too swoln with pride, rejoiced
(Indomitable as a man foredoomed)

That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his prayer,
I, in a flood of glory visible,
Stood o'er my dying votary and, deed
By deed, revealed, as all took place, the truth.
Then Theseus lay the woofullest of men,
And worthily; but ere the death-veils hid
His face, the murdered prince full pardon breathed
To his rash sire. Whereat Athenai wails.

So I, who ne'er forsake my votaries,
Lest in the cross-way none the honey-cake
Should tender, nor pour out the dog's hot life;
Lest at my fane the priests disconsolate
Should dress my image with some faded poor
Few crowns, made favours of, nor dare object
Such slackness to my worshippers who turn
Elsewhere the trusting heart and loaded hand,
As they had climbed Olumpos to report
Of Artemis and nowhere found her throne—
I interposed: and, this eventful night,—
(While round the funeral pyre the populace
Stood with fierce light on their black robes which bound
Each sobbing head, while yet their hair they clipped
O'er the dead body of their withered prince,
And, in his palace, Theseus prostrated
On the cold hearth, his brow cold as the slab
'T was bruised on, groaned away the heavy grief—
As the pyre fell, and down the cross logs crashed
Sending a crowd of sparkles through the night,

And the gay fire, elate with mastery,
Towered like a serpent o'er the clotted jars
Of wine, dissolving oils and frankincense,
And splendid gums like gold,)—my potency
Conveyed the perished man to my retreat
In the thrice-venerable forest here.

And this white-bearded sage who squeezes now
The berried plant, is Phoibos' son of fame,
Asclepios, whom my radiant brother taught
The doctrine of each herb and flower and root,
To know their secret'st virtue and express
The saving soul of all : who so has soothed
With lavers the torn brow and murdered cheeks,
Composed the hair and brought its gloss again,
And called the red bloom to the pale skin back,
And laid the strips and jagged ends of flesh
Even once more, and slacked the sinew's knot
Of every tortured limb—that now he lies
As if mere sleep possessed him underneath
These interwoven oaks and pines. Oh cheer,
Divine presenter of the healing rod,
Thy snake, with ardent throat and lulling eye,
Twines his lithe spires around ! I say, much cheer !
Proceed thou with thy wisest pharmacies !
And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-nymphs,
Ply, as the sage directs, these buds and leaves
That strew the turf around the twain ! While I
Await, in fitting silence, the event.

AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE

STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH,
THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,
The not-incurious in God's handiwork
(This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapour from his mouth, man's soul)
—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,
Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—
And aptest in contrivance (under God)
To baffle it by deftly stopping such :—
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with I
Three samples of true snake-stone—rarer still,
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho :
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labour unrepaid ?
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone
On many a flinty furlong of this land.
Also, the country-side is all on fire
With rumours of a marching hitherward :
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear ;
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls :
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
And once a town declared me for a spy ;
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
Since this poor covert where I pass the night,
This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
A man with plague-sores at the third degree
Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here !
'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
A viscid choler is observable
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say ;
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
Than our school wots of : there 's a spider here
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back ;
Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,
The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to ?

His service payeth me a sublimate
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
Best wait : I reach Jerusalem at morn,
There set in order my experiences,
Gather what most deserves, and give thee all—
Or I might add, Judæa's gum-tragacanth
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar—
But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay : my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
Protesteth his devotion is my price—
Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal ?
I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
What set me off a-writing first of all.
An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang !
For, be it this town's barrenness—or else
The Man had something in the look of him—
His case has struck me far more than 't is worth.
So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose
In the great press of novelty at hand
The care and pains this somehow stole from me)
I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,
Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth ?
The very man is gone from me but now,
Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.

Thus then, and let thy better wit help all !

'Tis but a case of mania—subinduced
By epilepsy, at the turning-point
Of trance prolonged unduly some three days:
When, by the exhibition of some drug
Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art
Unknown to me and which 't were well to know,
The evil thing out-breaking all at once
Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—
But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,
Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
The first conceit that entered might inscribe
Whatever it was minded on the wall
So plainly at that vantage, as it were,
(First come, first served) that nothing subsequent
Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls
The just-turned and new-established soul
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
That henceforth she will read or these or none.
And first—the man's own firm conviction rests
That he was dead (in fact they buried him)
—That he was dead and then restored to life
By a Nazarene physician of his tribe :
—'Sayeth, the same bade " Rise," and he did rise.
" Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.
Not so this figment !—not, that such a fume,
Instead of giving way to time and health,
Should eat itself into the life of life,

As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all !
For see, how he takes up the after-life.
The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
The body's habit wholly laudable,
As much, indeed, beyond the common health
As he were made and put aside to show.
Think, could we penetrate by any drug
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep !
Whence has the man the balm that brightens all ?
This grown man eyes the world now like a child.
Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—
He listened not except I spoke to him,
But folded his two hands and let them talk,
Watching the flies that buzzed : and yet no fool.
And that 's a sample how his years must go.
Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
Should find a treasure,—can he use the same
With straitened habits and with tastes starved small,
And take at once to his impoverished brain
The sudden element that changes things,
That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand,
And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust ?
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—
Warily parsimonious, when no need,

Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times ?
All prudent counsel as to what befits
The golden mean, is lost on such an one :
The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
So here—we call the treasure knowledge, say,
Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven :
The man is witless of the size, the sum,
The value in proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—
'T is one ! Then take it on the other side,
Speak of some trifling fact,—he will gaze rapt
With stupor at its very littleness,
(Far as I see) as if in that indeed
He caught prodigious import, whole results ;
And so will turn to us the bystanders
In ever the same stupor (note this point)
That we too see not with his opened eyes.
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
Preposterously, at cross purposes.
Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look
For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
Or pretermission of the daily craft !
While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
At play or in the school or laid asleep,

Will startle him to an agony of fear,
Exasperation, just as like. Demand
The reason why—" 't is but a word," object—
" A gesture "—he regards thee as our lord
Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
Looked at us (dost thou mind?) when, being young,
We both would unadvisedly recite
Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
Thou and the child have each a veil alike
Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both
Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know !
He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
(It is the life to lead perforcedly)
Which runs across some vast distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
The spiritual life around the earthly life :
The law of that is known to him as this,
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
So is the man perplexed with impulses
Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
And not along, this black thread through the blaze—
" It should be " baulked by " here it cannot be."
And oft the man's soul springs into his face
As if he saw again and heard again

His sage that bade him " Rise " and he did rise.
Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within
Admonishes : then back he sinks at once
To ashes, who was very fire before,
In sedulous recurrence to his trade
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread ;
And studiously the humbler for that pride,
Professedly the faultier that he knows
God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the heavenly will—
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
For that same death which must restore his being
To equilibrium, body loosening soul
Divorced even now by premature full growth :
He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
So long as God please, and just how God please.
He even seeketh not to please God more
(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do :
How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
His own conviction ? Ardent as he is—
Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old
" Be it as God please " reassureth him.
I probed the sore as thy disciple should :
" How, beast," said I, " this stolid carelessness

“ Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
“ To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
“ Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once ? ”
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
‘ The man is apathetic, you deduce ?
Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
Able and weak, affects the very brutes
And birds—how say I ? flowers of the field—
As a wise workman recognises tools
In a master’s workshop, loving what they make.
Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb :
Only impatient, let him do his best,
At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
An indignation which is promptly curbed :
As when in certain travel I have feigned
To be an ignoramus in our art
According to some preconceived design,
And happed to hear the land’s practitioners
Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
Prattle fantastically on disease,
Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace !

Thou wilt object—Why have I not ere this
Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source,
Conferring with the frankness that befits ?
Alas ! it grieveth me, the learned leech
Perished in a tumult many years ago,
Accused,—our learning’s fate,—of wizardry,

Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious as described to me.
His death, which happened when the earthquake fell
(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage
Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people—that 's their wont !
On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
How could he stop the earthquake ? That 's their way !
The other imputations must be lies :
But take one, though I loathe to give it thee,
In mere respect for any good man's fame.
(And after all, our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad ; should we count on what he says ?
Perhaps not : though in writing to a leech
'T is well to keep back nothing of a case.)
This man so cured regards the curer, then,
As—God forgive me ! who but God himself,
Creator and sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile !
—'Sayeth that such an one was born and lived,
Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,
And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith—but why all this of what he saith ?
Why write of trivial matters, things of price

John

Calling at every moment for remark ?
I noticed on the margin of a pool
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange !

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth !
Nor I myself discern in what is writ
Good cause for the peculiar interest
And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus :
I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came
A moon made like a face with certain spots
Multiform, manifold and menacing :
Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
In this old sleepy town at unaware,
The man and I. I send thee what is writ.
Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,
Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.
Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine ;
'Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell !

The very God ! think, Abib ; dost thou think ?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—

So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, " O heart I made, a heart beats here !
" Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself !
" Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine,
" But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
" And thou must love me who have died for thee ! "
The madman saith He said so : it is strange.

JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDITATION.

THERE 's heaven above, and night by night
I look right through its gorgeous roof ;
No suns and moons though e'er so bright
Avail to stop me ; splendor-proof
I keep the broods of stars aloof :
For I intend to get to God,
For 't is to God I speed so fast,
For in God's breast, my own abode,
Those shoals of dazzling glory, passed,
I lay my spirit down at last.
I lie where I have always lain,
God smiles as he has always smiled ;
Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,
Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled
The heavens, God thought on me his child ;
Ordained a life for me, arrayed
Its circumstances every one

To the minutest ; ay, God said
This head this hand should rest upon
Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.
And having thus created me,
Thus rooted me, he bade me grow,
Guiltless for ever, like a tree
That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know
The law by which it prospers so :
But sure that thought and word and deed
All go to swell his love for me,
Me, made because that love had need
Of something irreversibly
Pledged solely its content to be.
Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,
No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop !
I have God's warrant, could I blend
All hideous sins, as in a cup,
To drink the mingled venoms up ;
Secure my nature will convert
The draught to blossoming gladness fast :
While sweet dews turn to the gourd's hurt,
And bloat, and while they bloat it, blast,
As from the first its lot was cast.
For as I lie, smiled on, full-fed
By unexhausted power to bless,
I gaze below on hell's fierce bed,
And those its waves of flame oppress,
Swarming in ghastly wretchedness ;
Whose life on earth aspired to be

One altar-smoke, so puré !—to win
If not love like God's love for me,
At least to keep his anger in ;
And all their striving turned to sin.
Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white
With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,
The martyr, the wan acolyte,
The incense-swinging child,—undone
Before God fashioned star or sun !
God, whom I praise ; how could I praise,
If such as I might understand,
Make out and reckon on his ways,
And bargain for his love, and stand,
Paying a price, at his right hand ?

PICTOR IGNOTUS.

FLORENCE, 15—.

I COULD have painted pictures like that youth's
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up ! No bar
Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes
—Never did fate forbid me, star by star,
To outburst on your night with all my gift
Of fires from God : nor would my flesh have shrunk
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift
And wide to heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk
To the centre, of an instant ; or around

Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan
The licence and the limit, space and bound,
Allowed to truth made visible in man.
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,
Over the canvas could my hand have flung,
Each face obedient to its passion's law,
Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue ;
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,
A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place ;
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,—
O human faces, hath it spilt, my cup ?
What did ye give me that I have not saved ?
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well !)
Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,
As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South, or North,
Bound for the calmly satisfied great State,
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,
Through old streets named afresh from the event,
Till it reached home, where learned age should greet
My face, and youth, the star not yet distinct
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet !—
Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked
With love about, and praise, till life should end,
And then not go to heaven, but linger here,

Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,—
The thought grew frightful, 't was so wildly dear !
But a voice changed it. Glimpses of such sights
Have scared me, like the revels through a door
Of some strange house of idols at its rites !

This world seemed not the world it was before :
Mixed with my loving trusting ones, there trooped
. . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun
To press on me and judge me ? Though I stooped
Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . enough !

These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,
Count them for garniture and household-stuff,
And where they live needs must our pictures live
And see their faces, listen to their prate,
Partakers of their daily pettiness,
Discussed of,—“ This I love, or this I hate,

“ This likes me more, and this affects me less ! ”
Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles
My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles

With the same series, Virgin, Babe and Saint,
With the same cold calm beautiful regard,—

At least no merchant traffics in my heart ;
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward

Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart :
Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine

While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke,
They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,

'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.
So, die my pictures ! surely, gently die !
O youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth ?
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry ?
Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth ?

FRA LIPPO LIPPI.

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave !
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what 's to blame ? you think you see a monk !
What, 't is past midnight, and you go the rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar ?
The Carmine 's my cloister : hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that 's crept to keep him company !
Aha, you know your betters ? Then, you 'll take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I ?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he 's a certain . . . how d' ye call ?
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh ! you were best !

Remember and tell me, the day you 're hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe !
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you :
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net ?
He 's Judas to a tittle, that man is !
Just such a face ! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I 'm not angry ! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbours me
(And many more beside, lads ! more beside !)
And all 's come square again. I 'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand (" Look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped !
It 's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like ? or you should see !
Yes, I 'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you ? like enough !
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let 's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here 's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I 've been three weeks shut within my mew,

A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs of song,—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,—three slim
 shapes,
And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
That 's all I 'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
'There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met,—
Flower o' the rose,
If I 've been merry, what matter who knows?
And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!

Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—
Mine 's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting 's in that !
If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum 's the word naturally ; but a monk !
Come, what am I a beast for ? tell us, now !
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month :
“ So, boy, you 're minded,” quoth the good fat father
Wiping his own mouth, 't was refection-time,—
“ To quit this very miserable world ?
“ Will you renounce ” . . . “ the mouthful of bread ? ”
thought I ;
By no means ! Brief, they made a monk of me ;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'T was not for nothing—the good bellyful,

The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside !

“ Let ’s see what the urchin ’s fit for ”—that came next.

Not overmuch their way, I must confess.

Such a to-do ! They tried me with their books :

Lord, they ’d have taught me Latin in pure waste !

Flower o’ the clove,

All the Latin I construe is, “ amo ” I love !

But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets

Eight years together as my fortune was,

Watching folk’s faces to know who will fling

The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,

And who will curse or kick him for his pains,—

Which gentleman processional and fine,

Holding a candle to the Sacrament

Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch

The droppings of the wax to sell again,

Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—

How say I ?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop

His bone from the heap of offal in the street,—

Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,

He learns the look of things, and none the less

For admonition from the hunger-pinch.

I had a store of such remarks, be sure,

Which, after I found leisure, turned to use .

I drew men’s faces on my copy-books,

Scrawled them within the antiphonary’s marge,

Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,

Found eyes and nose and chin for A.s and B.s,

And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked
black.

“Nay,” quoth the Prior, “turn him out, d’ ye say?”

“In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.

“What if at last we get our man of parts,

“We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese

“And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine

“And put the front on it that ought to be!”

And hereupon he bade me daub away.

Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening.

First, every sort of monk, the black and white,

I drew them, fat and lean: then, folks at church,

From good old gossips waiting to confess

Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—

To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,

Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there

With the little children round him in a row

Of admiration, half for his beard and half

For that white anger of his victim’s son

Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,

Signing himself with the other because of Christ

(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this

After the passion of a thousand years)

Till some poor girl, her apron o’er her head,

(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve

On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,

Her pair of ear-rings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling) prayed, and so was gone.
I painted all, then cried "'T is ask and have ;
Choose, for more 's ready !"—laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
'The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies,—“ That 's the very man !
“ Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog !
“ That woman 's like the Prior's niece who comes
“ To care about his asthma : it 's the life !”
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funk'd ;
'Their betters took their turn to see and say :
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. “ How ? what 's here ?
“ Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all !
“ Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
“ As much as pea and pea ! it 's devil's game !
“ Your business is not to catch men with show,
“ With homage to the perishable clay,
“ But lift them over it, ignore it all,
“ Make them forget there 's such a thing as flesh.
“ Your business is to paint the souls of men—
“ Man's soul, and it 's a fire, smoke . . no, it 's not . .
“ It 's vapour done up like a new-born babe—
“ (In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
“ It 's . . well, what matters talking, it 's the soul !
“ Give us no more of body than shows soul !
“ Here 's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,

" That sets us praising,—why not stop with him ?
" Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
" With wonder at lines, colours, and what not ?
" Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms !
" Rub all out, try at it a second time.
" Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
" She 's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—
" Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off !
" Have it all out !" Now, is this sense, I ask ?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse ! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow 's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks nought.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order ? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy ? won't beauty go with these ?
Suppose I 've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold ?
Or say there 's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents :

That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have
missed,

Within yourself, when you return him thanks.

"Rub all out!" Well, well, there's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.

I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds:

You should not take a fellow eight years old

And make him swear to never kiss the girls.

I'm my own master, paint now as I please—

Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!

Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—

Those great rings serve more purposes than just

To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!

And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,

The heads shake still—"It's art's decline, my son!

"You're not of the true painters, great and old;

"Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find;

"Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer:

"Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!"

Flower o' the pine,

You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!

I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!

Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,

They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,

Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint

To please them—sometimes do, and sometimes don't;

For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come

A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—

A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(*Flower o' the peach,*
Death for us all, and his own life for each !)
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
The world and life 's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage ! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have ? Do they like grass or no—
May they or mayn't they ? all I want 's the thing
Settled for ever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself :
You don't like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught ;
I always see the garden and God there
A-making man's wife : and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me : I 'm a beast, I know.
But see, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning-star 's about to shine,
What will hap some day. We 've a youngster here
Comes to our convent, studies what I do,

Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop :
His name is Guidi—he 'll not mind the monks—
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
He picks my practice up—he 'll paint apace,
I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what 's sure to follow. You be judge !
You speak no Latin more than I, belike ;
However, you 're my man, you 've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all !
—For what ? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to ? What 's it all about ?
To be passed over, despised ? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at ? oh, this last of course !—you say.
But why not do as well as say,—paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it ?
God's works—paint anyone, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, " His works
" Are here already ; nature is complete :
" Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
" There 's no advantage ! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark ? we 're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see ;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,

Which is the same thing. Art was given for that ;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's hanging face ? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though ! How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth !
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you ! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves ! This world 's no blot for us,
Nor blank ; it means intensely, and means good :
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
" Ay but you don't so instigate to prayer ! "
Strikes in the Prior : " when your meaning 's plain
" It does not say to folks—remember matins,
" Or, mind you fast next Friday ! " Why, for this
What need of art at all ? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed cross-wise, or, what 's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a Saint Laurence six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style :
" How looks my painting, now the scaffold 's down ? "
I ask a brother : " Hugely," he returns—
" Already not one phiz of your three slaves
" Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
" But 's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
" The pious people have so eased their own
" With coming to say prayers there in a rage :
" We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.

“ Expect another job this time next year,
“ For pity and religion grow i’ the crowd—
“ Your painting serves its purpose ! ” Hang the fools !

—That is—you ’ll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, Got wot,
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unnaccustomed head like Chianti wine !
Oh, the church knows ! don’t misreport me, now !
It ’s natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself :
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me : I shall paint a piece
. . . There ’s for you ! Give me six months, then go, see
Something in Sant’ Ambrogio’s ! Bless the nuns !
They want a cast o’ my office. I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to Church at midsummer.
And then i’ the front, of course a saint or two—
Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent’s friends and gives them a long day,
And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz, (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience.) Well, all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come

Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo ! I !—
Mazed, motionless and moon-struck—I 'm the man !
Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear ?
I, caught up with my monk's things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
I, in this presence, this pure company !
Where 's a hole, where 's a corner for escape ?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast !"
—Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—
"He made you and devised you, after all,
"Though he 's none of you ! Could Saint John there,
draw—
"His camel-hair make up a painting-brush ?
"We come to brother Lippo for all that,
"*Iste perfecit opus !*" So, all smile—
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you 're gay
And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband ! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all 's saved for me, and for the church

A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence !
Your hand, sir, and good bye : no lights, no lights !
The street 's hushed, and I know my own way back,
Don't fear me ! There 's the grey beginning. Zooks

ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia ; bear with me for once :
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart ?
I 'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it ? tenderly ?
Oh, I 'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love !
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.

To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this !
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, neither ; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require .
It saves a model. So ! keep looking so—
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds !
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there ! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's : very dear, no less.
You smile ? why, there 's my picture ready made,
There 's what we painters call our harmony !
A common greyness silvers everything,—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That 's gone you know),—but I, at every point ;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There 's the bell clinking from the chapel-top ;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside ;
The last monk leaves the garden ; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh ? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,

A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead;
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that 's behind us! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak:
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love! so such things should be—
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 't is easy, all of it!
No sketches first, no studies, that 's long past:
I do what many dream of all their lives
—Dream? strive to do, and agonise to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less!

Well, less is more, Lucrezia : I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that 's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men ! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken ; what of that ? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered ; what of that ?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care ?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what 's a heaven for ? All is silver-grey
Placid and perfect with my art : the worse !
I know both what I want and what might gain ,
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
“ Had I been two, another and myself,
“ Our head would have o'erlooked the world !” No
doubt.
Yonder 's a work now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.

('T is copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way ;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak : its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it :
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me, out of me ! And wherefore out ?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you !
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind !
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
“ God and the glory ! never care for gain.
“ The present by the future, what is that ?
“ Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo !
“ Rafael is waiting : up to God, all three ! ”
I might have done it for you. So it seems :
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self .

The rest avail not. Why do I need you ?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo ?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not ;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :
Yet the will 's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'T is safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside ;
But they speak sometimes ; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak ! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau !
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,

To crown the issue with a last reward !
A good time, was it not, my kingly days ?
And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
'T is done and past ; 't was right, my instinct said ;
Too live the life grew, golden and not grey,
And I 'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way ?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was, to have ended there ; then, if
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost ?
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine !
“ Rafael did this, Andrea painted that ;
“ The Roman's is the better when you pray,
“ But still the other's Virgin was his wife— ”
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence ; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
“ Friend, there 's a certain sorry little scrub
“ Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
“ Who, were he set to plan and execute
“ As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,

“ Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours ! ”
To Rafael’s !—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go !
Ay, but the soul ! he ’s Rafael ! rub it out !
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he ? why, who but Michel Agnolo ?
Do you forget already words like those ?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
Is, whether you ’re—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed !
This hour has been an hour ! Another smile ?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend ?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now ; there ’s a star ;
Morello ’s gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me : oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with !
Let us but love each other. Must you go ?
That Cousin here again ? he waits outside ?
Must see you—you, and not with me ? Those loans ?

More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work 's my ware, and what 's it worth?
I 'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The grey remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not your's this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What 's better and what 's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.

My father and my mother died of want.
 Well, had I riches of my own? you see
 How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
 They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
 And I have laboured somewhat in my time
 And not been paid profusely. Some good son
 Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
 No doubt, there 's something strikes a balance. Yes,
 You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
 This must suffice me here. What would one have?
 In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
 For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
 To cover—the three first without a wife,
 While I have mine! So—still they overcome
 Because there 's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH.

ROME, 15—.

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity!
 Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
 Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well—

She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was !
What 's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world 's a dream
Life, how and what is it ? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
“ Do I live, am I dead ? ” Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace ;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know :
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care ;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same !
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam 's sure to lurk :
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands :
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him ! True peach,

Rosy and flawless : how I earned the prize !
Draw close : that conflagration of my church
—What then ? So much was saved if aught were missed !
My sons, ye would not be my death ? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . Ah God, I know not, I ! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten figleaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst !
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years :
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he ?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons ? Black—
'T was ever antique-black I meant ! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath ?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,

And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not ! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm ? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at !
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then !
'T is jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas !
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There 's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs ?
—That 's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters ? Ulpian serves his need
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupifying incense-smoke !
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point.
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work :

And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend ?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best !
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons ! Else I give the Pope
My villas ! Will ye ever eat my heart ?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizer and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
“ Do I live, am I dead ? ” There, leave me, there !
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it ! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble ! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world !
Well go ! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,

But in a row : and, going, turn your backs
 —Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
 And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
 That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
 Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
 As still he envied me, so fair she was !

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY.

No more wine ? then we 'll push back chairs and talk.
 A final glass for me, though : cool, i' faith !
 We ought to have our Abbey back, you see.
 It 's different, preaching in basilicas,
 And doing duty in some masterpiece
 Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his heart !
 I doubt if they 're half baked, those chalk rosettes,
 Ciphers and stucco-twiddlings everywhere ;
 It 's just like breathing in a lime-kiln : eh ?
 These hot long ceremonies of our church
 Cost us a little—oh, they pay the price,
 You take me—amply pay it ! Now, we 'll talk.

So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.
 No deprecation,—nay, I beg you, sir !
 Beside 't is our engagement : do n't you know,
 I promised, if you 'd watch a dinner out,
 We 'd see truth dawn together ?—truth that peeps

Over the glass's edge when dinner 's done,
And body gets its sop and holds its noise
And leaves soul free a little. Now 's the time :
'T is break of day ! You do despise me then.
And if I say, " despise me,"—never fear !
I know you do not in a certain sense—
Not in my arm-chair, for example : here,
I well imagine you respect my place
(*Status, entourage, worldly circumstance*)
Quite to its value—very much indeed :
—Are up to the protesting eyes of you
In pride at being seated here for once—
You 'll turn it to such capital account !
When somebody, through years and years to come,
Hints of the bishop,—names me—that 's enough :
" Blougram ? I knew him "—(into it you slide)
" Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi Day,
" All alone, we two ; he 's a clever man :
" And after dinner,—why, the wine you know,—
" Oh, there was wine, and good !—what with the wine . . .
" 'Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk !
" He 's no bad fellow, Blougram ; he had seen
" Something of mine he relished, some review :
" He 's quite above their humbug in his heart,
" Half-said as much, indeed—the thing 's his trade.
" I warrant, Blougram 's sceptical at times :
" How otherwise ? I liked him, I confess ! "
Che che, my dear sir, as we say at Rome,
Don't you protest now ! It 's fair give and take ;

You have had your turn and spoken your home-truths :
'The hand 's mine now, and here you follow suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first fact stays—
You do despise me ; your ideal of life
Is not the bishop's : you would not be I.
You would like better to be Goethe, now,
Or Buonaparte, or, bless me, lower still,
Count D'Orsay,—so you did what you preferred,
Spoke as you thought, and, as you cannot help,
Believed or disbelieved, no matter what,
So long as on that point, whate'er it was,
You loosed your mind, were whole and sole yourself,
—That, my ideal never can include,
Upon that element of truth and worth
Never be based ! for say they make me Pope
(They can't—suppose it for our argument)
Why, there I 'm at my tether's end, I 've reached
My height, and not a height which pleases you :
An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say.
It 's like those eerie stories nurses tell,
Of how some actor played Death on a stage,
With pasteboard crown, sham orb and tinsel'd dart,
And called himself the monarch of the world ;
Then, going in the tire-room afterward,
Because the play was done, to shift himself,
Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly,
The moment he had shut the closet door,
By Death himself. Thus God might touch a Pope

At unawares ask what his baubles mean,
And whose part he presumed to play just now?
Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true!

So, drawing comfortable breath again,
You weigh and find, whatever more or less
I boast of my ideal realized,
Is nothing in the balance when opposed
To your ideal, your grand simple life,
Of which you will not realize one jot.
I am much, you are nothing; you would be all,
I would be merely much: you beat me there.

No, friend, you do not beat me: hearken why!
The common problem, yours, mine, every one's,
Is—not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be,—but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means: a very different thing!
No abstract intellectual plan of life
Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws,
But one, a man, who is man and nothing more,
May lead within a world which (by your leave)
Is Rome or London, not Fool's-paradise.
Embellish Rome, idealize away,
Make paradise of London if you can,
You 're welcome, nay, you 're wise.

A simile!

We mortals cross the ocean of this world

Each in his average cabin of a life ;
The best 's not big, the worst yields elbow-room.
Now for our six months' voyage—how prepare ?
You come on shipboard with a landsman's list
Of things he calls convenient : so they are !
An India screen is pretty furniture,
A piano-forte is a fine resource,
All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf,
The new edition fifty volumes long ;
And little Greek books, with the funny type
They get up well at Leipsic, fill the next :
Go on ! slabbed marble, what a bath it makes !
And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us add !
'T were pleasant could Correggio's fleeting glow
Hang full in face of one where'er one roams,
Since he more than the others brings with him
Italy's self,—the marvellous Modenese !—
Yet was not on your list before, perhaps.
—Alas, friend, here 's the agent . . . is 't the name ?
The captain, or whoever 's master here—
You see him screw his face up ; what 's his cry
Ere you set foot on shipboard ? “ Six feet square ! ”
If you won't understand what six feet mean,
Compute and purchase stores accordingly—
And if, in pique because he overhauls
Your Jerome, piano and bath, you come on board
Bare—why, you cut a figure at the first
While sympathetic landmen see you off ;
Not afterward, when long ere half seas over,

You peep up from your utterly naked boards
Into some snug and well-appointed berth,
Like mine for instance (try the cooler jug—
Put back the other, but don't jog the ice!)
And mortified you mutter "Well and good ;
" He sits enjoying his sea-furniture ;
" 'T is stout and proper, and there 's store of it :
" Though I 've the better notion, all agree,
" Of fitting rooms up. Hang the carpenter,
" Neat ship-shape fixings and contrivances—
" I would have brought my Jerome, frame and all !"
And meantime you bring nothing : never mind—
You 've proved your artist-nature : what you don't
You might bring, so despise me, as I say.

Now come, let 's backward to the starting-place.
See my way : we 're two college friends, suppose.
Prepare together for our voyage, then ;
Each note and check the other in his work,—
Here 's mine, a bishop's outfit ; criticise !
What 's wrong ? why won't you be a bishop too ?

Why first, you don't believe, you don't and can't,
(Not statedly, that is, and fixedly
And absolutely and exclusively)
In any revelation called divine.
No dogmas nail your faith ; and what remains
But say so, like the honest man you are ?
First, therefore, overhaul theology !

Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to think,
Must find believing every whit as hard :
And if I do not frankly say as much,
The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now wait, my friend : well, I do not believe—
If you 'll accept no faith that is not fixed,
Absolute and exclusive, as you say.
You 're wrong—I mean to prove it in due time.
Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie
I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall,
So give up hope accordingly to solve—
(To you, and over the wine). Our dogmas then
With both of us, though in unlike degree,
Missing full credence—overboard with them !
I mean to meet you on your own premise :
Good, there go mine in company with yours !

And now what are we ? unbelievers both,
Calm and complete, determinately fixed
To-day, to-morrow and for ever, pray ?
You 'll guarantee me that ? Not so, I think !
In no wise ! all we 've gained is, that belief,
As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,
Confounds us like its predecessor. Where 's
The gain ? how can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us ?—the problem here.
Just when we are safest, there 's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,

A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that 's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
The grand Perhaps ! We look on helplessly.
There the old misgivings, crooked questions are—
This good God,—what he could do, if he would,
Would, if he could—then must have done long since :
If so, when, where and how ? some way must be,—
Once feel about, and soon or late you hit
Some sense, in which it might be, after all.
Why not, " The Way, the Truth, the Life ? "

—That way

Over the mountain, which who stands upon
Is apt to doubt if it be indeed a road ;
While if he view it from the waste itself,
Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,
Not vague, mistakeable ! what 's a break or two
Seen from the unbroken desert either side ?
And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)
What if the breaks themselves should prove at last
The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith ?
And so we stumble at truth's very test !
All we have gained then by our unbelief
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,

For one of faith diversified by doubt :

We called the chess-board white,—we call it black.

“ Well,” you rejoin, “ the end ’s no worse, at least ;
“ We ’ve reason for both colours on the board :
“ Why not confess then, where I drop the faith
“ And you the doubt, that I ’m as right as you ? ”

Because, friend, in the next place, this being so,
And both things even,—faith and unbelief
Left to a man’s choice,—we ’ll proceed a step,
Returning to our image, which I like.

A man’s choice, yes—but a cabin-passenger’s—
The ’man made for the special life o’ the world—
Do you forget him ? I remember though !
Consult our ship’s conditions and you find
One and but one choice suitable to all ;
The choice, that you unluckily prefer,
Turning things topsy-turvy—they or it
Going to the ground. Belief or unbelief
Bears upon life, determines its whole course,
Begins at its beginning. See the world
Such as it is,—you made it not, nor I ;
I mean to take it as it is,—and you,
Not so you ’ll take it,—though you get nought else.
I know the special kind of life I like,
What suits the most my idiosyncrasy,
Brings out the best of me and bears me fruit

In power, peace, pleasantness and length of days.
I find that positive belief does this
For me, and unbelief, no whit of this.
—For you, it does, however?—that, we 'll try !
'T is clear, I cannot lead my life, at least,
Induce the world to let me peaceably,
Without declaring at the outset, “ Friends,
“ I absolutely and peremptorily
“ Believe ! ”—I say, faith is my waking life :
One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals,
We know, but waking 's the main point with us
And my provision 's for life's waking part.
Accordingly, I use heart, head and hand
All day, I build, scheme, study, and make friends ;
And when night overtakes me, down I lie,
Sleep, dream a little, and get done with it,
The sooner the better, to begin afresh.
What 's midnight doubt before the dayspring's faith ?
You, the philosopher, that disbelieve,
That recognise the night, give dreams their weight—
To be consistent you should keep your bed,
Abstain from healthy acts that prove you man,
For fear you drowse perhaps at unawares !
And certainly at night you 'll sleep and dream,
Live through the day and bustle as you please.
And so you live to sleep as I to wake,
To unbelieve as I to still believe ?
Well, and the common sense o' the world calls you
Bed-ridden,—and its good things come to me.

Its estimation, which is half the fight,
'That 's the first-cabin comfort I secure :
The next . . . but you perceive with half an eye !
Come, come, it 's best believing, if we may ;
You can't but own that !

Next, concede again,
If once we choose belief, on all accounts
We can't be too decisive in our faith,
Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,
To suit the world which gives us the good things.
In every man's career are certain points
Whereon he dares not be indifferent ;
The world detects him clearly, if he dare,
As baffled at the game, and losing life.
He may care little or he may care much
For riches, honour, pleasure, work, repose,
Since various theories of life and life's
Success are extant which might easily
Comport with either estimate of these ;
And whoso chooses wealth or poverty,
Labour or quiet, is not judged a fool
Because his fellow would choose otherwise :
We let him choose upon his own account
So long as he 's consistent with his choice.
But certain points, left wholly to himself,
When once a man has arbitrated on.
We say he must succeed there or go hang.
'Thus, he should wed the woman he loves most

Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or need—
For he can't wed twice. Then, he must avouch,
Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,
The form of faith his conscience holds the best,
Whate'er the process of conviction was :
For nothing can compensate his mistake
On such a point, the man himself being judge :
He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his soul.

Well now, there 's one great form of Christian faith
I happened to be born in—which to teach
Was given me as I grew up, on all hands,
As best and readiest means of living by ;
The same on examination being proved
The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise
And absolute form of faith in the whole world—
Accordingly, most potent of all forms
For working on the world. Observe, my friend !
Such as you know me, I am free to say,
In these hard latter days which hamper one,
Myself—by no immoderate exercise
Of intellect and learning, but the tact
To let external forces work for me,
—Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread ;
Bid Peter's creed, or rather, Hildebrand's,
Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world
And make my life an ease and joy and pride ;
It does so,—which for me 's a great point gained,
Who have a soul and body that exact

A comfortable care in many ways.
'There 's power in me and will to dominate
Which I must exercise, they hurt me else :
In many ways I need mankind's respect,
Obedience, and the love that 's born of fear :
While at the same time, there 's a taste I have,
A toy of soul, a titillating thing,
Refuses to digest these dainties crude.
'The naked life is gross till clothed upon :
I must take what men offer, with a grace
As though I would not, could I help it, take !
An uniform I wear though over-rich—
Something imposed on me, no choice of mine ;
No fancy-dress worn for pure fancy's sake
And despicable therefore ! now folks kneel
And kiss my hand—of course the Church's hand.
Thus I am made, thus life is best for me,
And thus that it should be I have procured ;
And thus it could not be another way,
I venture to imagine.

You 'll reply,

So far my choice, no doubt, is a success ;
But were I made of better elements,
With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like you,
I hardly would account the thing success
'Though it did all for me I say.

But, friend,

We speak of what is ; not of what might be,

And how 't were better if 't were otherwise.
I am the man you see here plain enough :
Grant I 'm a beast, why, beasts must lead beasts' lives !
Suppose I own at once to tail and claws ;
The tailless man exceeds me : but being tailed
I 'll lash out lion fashion, and leave apes
To dock their stump and dress their haunches up.
My business is not to remake myself,
But make the absolute best of what God made.
Or—our first simile—though you prove me doomed
To a viler berth still, to the steerage-hole,
The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should strive
To make what use of each were possible ;
And as this cabin gets upholstery,
That hutch should rustle with sufficient straw.

But, friend, I do n't acknowledge quite so fast
I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes
Enumerated so complacently,
On the mere ground that you forsooth can find
In this particular life I choose to lead
No fit provision for them. Can you not ?
Say you, my fault is I address myself
To grosser estimators than should judge ?
And that 's no way of holding up the soul,
Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows
One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools'—
Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that.
I pine among my million imbeciles

(You think) aware some dozen men of sense
Eye me and know me, whether I believe
In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,
And am a fool, or disbelieve in her
And am a knave,—approve in neither case,
Withhold their voices though I look their way :
Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end
(The thing they gave at Florence,—what 's its name ?)
While the mad housful's plaudits near out-bang
His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones,
He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths
Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here—
'That even your prime men who appraise their kind
Are men still, catch a wheel within a wheel,
See more in a truth than the truth's simple self,
Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street
Sixty the minute ; what 's to note in that ?
You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack ;
Him you must watch—he 's sure to fall, yet stands !
Our interest 's on the dangerous edge of things.
'The honest thief, the tender murderer,
'The superstitious atheist, demirep
'That loves and saves her soul in new French books—
We watch while these in equilibrium keep
The giddy line midway : one step aside,
They 're classed and done with. I, then, keep the line
Before your sages,—just the men to shrink

From the gross weights, coarse scales and labels broad
You offer their refinement. Fool or knave?
Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave
When there 's a thousand diamond weights between?
So, I enlist them. Your picked twelve, you 'll find,
Profess themselves indignant, scandalized
At thus being held unable to explain
How a superior man who disbelieves
May not believe as well: that 's Schelling's way!
It 's through my coming in the tail of time,
Nicking the minute with a happy tact.
Had I been born three hundred years ago
They 'd say, "What 's strange? Blougram of course
believes;"

And, seventy years since, "disbelieves of course."
But now, "He may believe; and yet, and yet
"How can he?" All eyes turn with interest.
Whereas, step off the line on either side—
You, for example, clever to a fault,
The rough and ready man who write apace,
Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less—
You disbelieve! Who wonders and who cares?
Lord So-and-so—his coat bedropped with wax,
All Peter's chains about his waist, his back
Brave with the needlework of Noodledom—
Believes! Again, who wonders and who cares?
But I, the man of sense and learning too,
The able to think yet act, the this, the that,
I, to believe at this late time of day!

Enough ; you see, I need not fear contempt.

—Except it 's yours ! Admire me as these may
You do n't. But whom at least do you admire ?
Present your own perfection, your ideal,
Your pattern man for a minute—oh, make haste !
Is it Napoleon you would have us grow ?
Concede the means ; allow his head and hand,
(A large concession, clever as you are)
Good ! In our common primal element
Of unbelief (we can't believe, you know—
We 're still at that admission, recollect !)
Where do you find—apart from, towering o'er
The secondary temporary aims
Which satisfy the gross taste you despise—
Where do you find his star?—his crazy trust
God knows through what or in what ? it 's alive
And shines and leads him, and that 's all we want.
Have we aught in our sober night shall point
Such ends as his were, and direct the means
Of working out our purpose straight as his,
Nor bring a moment's trouble on success
With after-care to justify the same ?
—Be a Napoleon and yet disbelieve—
Why, the man 's mad, friend, take his light away !
What 's the vague good o' the world, for which you dare
With comfort to yourself blow millions up ?
We neither of us see it ! we do see
The blown-up millions—spatter of their brains
And writhing of their bowels and so forth,

In that bewildering entanglement
Of horrible eventualities
Past calculation to the end of time !
Can I mistake for some clear word of God
(Which were my ample warrant for it all)
His puff of hazy instinct, idle talk,
“ The State, that ’s I,” quack-nonsense about crowns,
And (when one beats the man to his last hold)
A vague idea of setting things to rights,
Policing people efficaciously,
More to their profit, most of all to his own ;
The whole to end that dismallest of ends
By an Austrian marriage, cant to us the Church,
And resurrection of the old *régime* ?
Would I, who hope to live a dozen years,
Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and such ?
No : for, concede me but the merest chance
Doubt may be wrong—there ’s judgment, life to come !
With just that chance, I dare not. Doubt proves right ?
This present life is all ?—you offer me
Its dozen noisy years, without a chance
That wedding an arch-duchess, wearing lace,
And getting called by divers new-coined names,
Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me dine,
Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like !
Therefore I will not.

Take another case ;
Fit up the cabin yet another way.

What say you to the poets? shall we write
Hamlet, Othello—make the world our own,
Without a risk to run of either sort?
I can't!—to put the strongest reason first.
“But try,” you urge, “the trying shall suffice;
“The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life:
“Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest to fate!”
Spare my self-knowledge—there's no fooling me!
If I prefer remaining my poor self,
I say so not in self-dispraise but praise.
If I'm a Shakespeare, let the well alone;
Why should I try to be what now I am?
If I'm no Shakespeare, as too probable,—
His power and consciousness and self-delight
And all we want in common, shall I find—
Trying for ever? while on points of taste
Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he and I
Are dowered alike—I'll ask you, I or he,
Which in our two lives realizes most?
Much, he imagined—somewhat, I possess.
He had the imagination; stick to that!
Let him say, “In the face of my soul's works
“Your world is worthless and I touch it not
“Lest I should wrong them”—I'll withdraw my plea.
But does he say so? look upon his life!
Himself, who only can, gives judgment there.
He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces
To build the trimmest house in Stratford town;
Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of things,

Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's lute ;
Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too,
And none more, had he seen its entry once,
'Than " Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal."
Why then should I who play that personage,
The very Pandulph Shakespeare's fancy made,
Be told that had the poet chanced to start
From where I stand now (some degree like mine
Being just the goal he ran his race to reach)
He would have run the whole race back, forsooth,
And left being Pandulph, to begin write plays ?
Ah, the earth's best can be but the earth's best !
Did Shakespeare live, he could but sit at home
And get himself in dreams the Vatican,
Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls,
And English books, none equal to his own,
Which I read, bound in gold, (he never did).
—Terni's fall, Naples' bay and Gothard's top—
Eh, friend ? I could not fancy one of these ;
But, as I pour this claret, there they are :
I've gained them—crossed St. Gothard last July
With ten mules to the carriage and a bed
Slung inside ; is my hap the worse for that ?
We want the same things, Shakespeare and myself,
And what I want, I have : he, gifted more,
Could fancy he too had it when he liked,
But not so thoroughly that, if fate allowed,
He would not have it also in my sense.
We play one game ; I send the ball aloft

No less adroitly that of fifty strokes
Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and high
Which sends them back to me : I wish and get.
He struck balls higher and with better skill,
But at a poor fence level with his head,
And hit—his Stratford house, a coat of arms,
Successful dealings in his grain and wool,—
While I receive heaven's incense in my nose
And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess.
Ask him, if this life's all, who wins the game ?

Believe—and our whole argument breaks up.
Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat ;
Only, we can't command it ; fire and life
Are all, dead matter's nothing, we agree :
And be it a mad dream or God's very breath,
'The fact's the same,—belief's fire, once in us,
Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself :
We penetrate our life with such a glow
As fire lends wood and iron—this turns steel,
'That burns to ash—all's one, fire proves its power
For good or ill, since men call flare success.
But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn.
Light one in me, I'll find it food enough !
Why, to be Luther—that's a life to lead,
Incomparably better than my own.
He comes, reclaims God's earth for God, he says,
Sets up God's rule again by simple means,
Re-opens a shut book, and all is done.

He flared out in the flaring of mankind ;
Such Luther's luck was : how shall such be mine ?
If he succeeded, nothing 's left to do :
And if he did not altogether—well,
Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be
I might be also. But to what result ?
He looks upon no future : Luther did.
What can I gain on the denying side ?
Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts,
Read the text right, emancipate the world—
The emancipated world enjoys itself
With scarce a thank-you : Blougram told it first
It could not owe a farthing,—not to him
More than Saint Paul ! 't would press its pay, you
think ?
'Then add there 's still that plaguy hundredth chance
Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is run—
For what gain ? not for Luther's, who secured
A real heaven in his heart throughout his life,
Supposing death a little altered things.

“ Ay, but since really you lack faith,” you cry,
“ You run the same risk really on all sides,
“ In cool indifference as bold unbelief.
“ As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.
“ It 's not worth having, such imperfect faith,
“ No more available to do faith's work
“ Than unbelief like mine. Whole faith, or none !”

Softly, my friend ! I must dispute that point.
Once own the use of faith, I 'll find you faith.
We 're back on Christian ground. You call for faith :
I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.
The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,
If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does ?
By life and man's free will, God gave for that !
To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice :
That 's our one act, the previous work 's his own.
You criticize the soil ? it reared this tree—
'This broad life and whatever fruit it bears !
What matter though I doubt at every pore,
Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,
Doubts in the trivial work of every day,
Doubts at the very bases of my soul
In the grand moments when she probes herself—
If finally I have a life to show,
The thing I did, brought out in evidence
Against the thing done to me underground
By hell and all its brood, for aught I know ?
I say, whence sprang this ? shows it faith or doubt ?
All 's doubt in me ; where 's break of faith in this ?
It is the idea, the feeling and the love,
God means mankind should strive for and show forth
Whatever be the process to that end,—
And not historic knowledge, logic sound,
And metaphysical acumen, sure !
“ What think ye of Christ,” friend ? when all 's done and
said,

Like you this Christianity or not?
It may be false, but will you wish it true?
Has it your vote to be so if it can?
Trust you an instinct silenced long ago
That will break silence and enjoin you love
What mortified philosophy is hoarse,
And all in vain, with bidding you despise?
If you desire faith—then you 've faith enough:
What else seeks God—nay, what else seek ourselves?
You form a notion of me, we 'll suppose,
On hearsay; it 's a favourable one:
“ But still,” (you add) “ there was no such good man,
“ Because of contradiction in the facts.
“ One proves, for instance, he was born in Rome,
“ This Blougram; yet throughout the tales of him
“ I see he figures as an Englishman.”
Well, the two things are reconcileable.
But would I rather you discovered that,
Subjoining—“ Still, what matter though they be?
‘ Blougram concerns me nought, born here or there.”

Pure faith indeed—you know not what you ask!
Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,
Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much
The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.
It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare.
Some think, Creation 's meant to show him forth:
I say it 's meant to hide him all it can,
And that 's what all the blessed evil 's for.

Its use in Time is to environ us,
Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough
Against that sight till we can bear its stress.
Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain
And lidless eye and disemprisoned heart
Less certainly would wither up at once
Than mind, confronted with the truth of him.
But time and earth case-harden us to live ;
The feeblest sense is trusted most ; the child
Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place,
Plays on and grows to be a man like us.
With me, faith, means perpetual unbelief
Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot
Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.
Or, if that 's too ambitious,—here 's my box—
I need the excitation of a pinch
Threatening the torpor of the inside-nose
Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes,
“ Leave it in peace ” advise the simple folk :
Make it aware of peace by itching-fits,
Say I—let doubt occasion still more faith !

You 'll say, once all believed, man, woman, child,
In that dear middle-age these noodles praise.
How you 'd exult if I could put you back
Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,
Geology, ethnology, what not,
(Greek endings, each the little passing-bell
That signifies some faith 's about to die)

And set you square with Genesis again,—
When such a traveller told you his last news,
He saw the ark a-top of Ararat
But did not climb there since 't was getting dusk
And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot !
How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,
How act? As other people felt and did ;
With soul more blank than this decanter's knob,
Believe—and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate
Full in belief's face, like the beast you 'd be !

No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man 's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
He 's left, himself, i' the middle : the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life !
Never leave growing till the life to come !
Here, we 've got callous to the Virgin's winks
That used to puzzle people wholesomely :
Men have outgrown the shame of being fools.
What are the laws of nature, not to bend
If the Church bid them?—brother Newman asks.
Up with the Immaculate Conception, then—
On to the rack with faith !—is my advice.
Will not that hurry us upon our knees,
Knocking our breasts, “ It can't be—yet it shall !
“ Who am I, the worm, to argue with my Pope ?
“ Low things confound the high things ! ” and so forth.
That 's better than acquitting God with grace

As some folks do. He 's tried—no case is proved,
Philosophy is lenient—he may go !

You 'll say, the old system 's not so obsolete
But men believe still : ay, but who and where ?
King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet
'The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes ;
But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint
Believes God watches him continually,
As he believes in fire that it will burn,
Or rain that it will drench him ? Break fire's law,
Sin against rain, although the penalty
Be just a singe or soaking ? " No," he smiles ;
" Those laws are laws that can enforce themselves."

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is great,
My faith 's still greater, then my faith 's enough.
I have read much, thought much, experienced much,
Yet would die rather than avow my fear
The Naples' liquefaction may be false,
When set to happen by the palace-clock
According to the clouds or dinner-time.
I hear you recommend, I might at least
Eliminate, decrassify my faith
Since I adopt it ; keeping what I must
And leaving what I can—such points as this.
I won't—that is, I can't throw one away.
Supposing there 's no truth in what I hold
About the need of trial to man's faith,

Still, when you bid me purify the same,
To such a process I discern no end.
Clearing off one excrescence to see two,
There 's ever a next in size, now grown as big,
That meets the knife : I cut and cut again !
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last
But Fichte's clever cut at God himself ?
Experimentalize on sacred things !
I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain
To stop betimes : they all get drunk alike.
The first step, I am master not to take.

You 'd find the cutting-process to your taste
As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned,
Nor see more danger in it,—you retort.
Your taste 's worth mine ; but my taste proves more wise
When we consider that the steadfast hold
On the extreme end of the chain of faith
Gives all the advantage, makes the difference
With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule :
We are their lords, or they are free of us,
Just as we tighten or relax our hold.
So, other matters equal, we 'll revert
To the first problem—which, if solved my way
And thrown into the balance, turns the scale—
How we may lead a comfortable life,
How suit our luggage to the cabin's size.

Of course you are remarking all this time

How narrowly and grossly I view life,
 Respect the creature-comforts, care to rule
 The masses, and regard complacently
 "The cabin," in our old phrase. Well, I do.
 I act for, talk for, live for this world now,
 As this world prizes action, life and talk :
 No prejudice to what next world may prove,
 Whose new laws and requirements, my best pledge
 To observe then, is that I observe these now,
 Shall do hereafter what I do meanwhile.
 Let us concede (gratuitously though)
 Next life relieves the soul of body, yields
 Pure spiritual enjoyment : well, my friend,
 Why lose this life i' the meantime, since its use
 May be to make the next life more intense ?

Do you know, I have often had a dream
 (Work it up in your next month's article)
 Of man's poor spirit in its progress, still
 Losing true life for ever and a day
 Through ever trying to be and ever being—
 In the evolution of successive spheres—
Before its actual sphere and place of life,
 Halfway into the next, which having reached,
 It shoots with corresponding foolery
 Halfway into the next still, on and off !
 As when a traveller, bound from North to South,
 Scouts fur in Russia ; what 's its use in France ?
 In France spurns tiannel ; where 's its need in Spain ?

In Spain drops cloth, too cumbrous for Algiers !
Linen goes next, and last the skin itself,
A superfluity at Timbuctoo.
When, through his journey, was the fool at ease ?
I 'm at ease now, friend ; worldly in this world,
I take and like its way of life ; I think
My brothers, who administer the means,
Live better for my comfort—that 's good too
And God, if he pronounce upon such life,
Approves my service, which is better still.
If he keep silence,—why, for you or me
Or that brute-beast pulled-up in to-day's "Times,"
What odds is 't, save to ourselves, what life we lead ?

You meet me at this issue : you declare,—
All special-pleading done with, truth is truth,
And justifies itself by undreamed ways.
You do n't fear but it 's better, if we doubt,
To say so, act up to our truth perceived
However feebly. Do then,—act away !
'T is there I 'm on the watch for you. How one acts
Is, both of us agree, our chief concern :
And how you 'll act is what I fain would see
If, like the candid person you appear,
You dare to make the most of your life's scheme
As I of mine, live up to its full law
Since there 's no higher law that counterchecks.
Put natural religion to the test.
You 've just demolished the revealed with—quick,

Down to the root of all that checks your will,
All prohibition to lie, kill and thief
Or even to be an atheistic priest !
Suppose a pricking to incontinence—
Philosophers deduce you chastity
Or shame, from just the fact that at the first
Whoso embraced a woman in the field,
Threw club down and forewent his brains beside,
So, stood a ready victim in the reach
Of any brother-savage, club in hand ;
Hence saw the use of going out of sight
In wood or cave to prosecute his loves :
I read this in a French book t' other day.
Does law so analysed coerce you much ?
Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where matters end,
But you who reach where the first thread begins,
You 'll soon cut that !—which means you can, but won't
Through certain instincts, blind, unreasoned-out,
You dare not set aside, you can't tell why,
But there they are, and so you let them rule.
Then, friend, you seem as much a slave as I,
A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite,
Without the good the slave expects to get,
In case he has a master after all !
You own your instincts ? why, what else do I,
Who want, am made for, and must have a God
Ere I can be aught, do aught ?—no mere name
Want, but the true thing with what proves its truth,
To wit, a relation from that thing to me,

'Touching from head to foot—which touch I feel,
And with it take the rest, this life of ours !
I live my life here ; yours you dare not live.

—Not as I state it, who (you please subjoin)
Disfigure such a life and call it names,
While, to your mind, remains another way
For simple men : knowledge and power have rights,
But ignorance and weakness have rights too.
There needs no crucial effort to find truth
If here or there or anywhere about :
We ought to turn each side, try hard and see,
And if we can't, be glad we 've earned at least
The right, by one laborious proof the more,
To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage.
Men are not angels, neither are they brutes :
Something we may see, all we cannot see.
What need of lying ? I say, I see all,
And swear to each detail the most minute
In what I think a Pan's face—you, mere cloud :
I swear I hear him speak and see him wink,
For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,
Mankind may doubt there 's any cloud at all.
You take the simple life—ready to see,
Willing to see (for no cloud's worth a face)—
And leaving quiet what no strength can move,
And which, who bids you move ? who has the right ?
I bid you ; but you are God's sheep, not mine :
“ *Pastor est tui Dominus.*” You find

In this the pleasant pasture of our life
Much you may eat without the least offence,
Much you do n't eat because your maw objects,
Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock
Open great eyes at you and even butt,
And thereupon you like your mates so well
You cannot please yourself, offending them ;
Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep,
You weigh your pleasure with their butts and bleats
And strike the balance. Sometimes certain fears
Restrain you, real checks since you find them so ;
Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks :
And thus you graze through life with not one lie,
And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name?

If so, you beat—which means you are not I—
Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill
Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with,
But motioned to the velvet of the sward
By those obsequious wethers' very selves.
Look at me, sir ; my age is double yours :
At yours, I knew beforehand, so enjoyed,
What now I should be—as, permit the word,
I pretty well imagine your whole range
And stretch of tether twenty years to come.
We have both minds and bodies much alike :
In truth's name, do n't you want my bishopric,
My daily bread, my influence and my state ?

You 're young. I 'm old, you must be old one day ;
Will you find then, as I do hour by hour,
Women their lovers kneel to, who cut curls
From your fat lap-dog's ear to grace a brooch—
Dukes, who petition just to kiss your ring—
With much beside you know or may conceive ?
Suppose we die to-night : well, here am I,
Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me,
While writing all the same my articles
On music, poetry, the fictile vase
Found at Albano, chess, Anacreon's Greek.
But you—the highest honour in your life,
The thing you 'll crown yourself with, all your days,
Is—dining here and drinking this last glass
I pour you out in sign of amity
Before we part for ever. Of your power
And social influence, worldly worth in short,
Judge what 's my estimation by the fact,
I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech,
Hint secrecy on one of all these words !
You 're shrewd and know that should you publish one
The world would brand the lie—my enemies first,
Who 'd sneer—" the bishop 's an arch-hypocrite.
" And knave perhaps, but not so frank a fool."
Whereas I should not dare for both my ears
Breathe one such syllable, smile one such smile,
Before the chaplain who reflects myself—
My shade 's so much more potent than your flesh.
What 's your reward, self-abnegating friend ?

Stood you confessed of those exceptional
And privileged great natures that dwarf mine—
A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,
A poet just about to print his ode,
A statesman with a scheme to stop this war,
An artist whose religion is his art—
I should have nothing to object : such men
Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them,
Their drugget 's worth my purple, they beat me.
But you,—you 're just as little those as I—
You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,
Write stately for Blackwood's Magazine,
Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul
Unseized by the Germans yet—which view you 'll print—
Meantime the best you have to show being still
That lively lightsome article we took
Almost for the true Dickens,—what 's its name?
“ The Slum and Cellar, or Whitechapel life
“ Limned after dark ! ” it made me laugh, I know,
And pleased a month, and brought you in ten pounds.
—Success I recognize and compliment,
And therefore give you, if you choose, three words
(The card and pencil-scratch is quite enough)
Which whether here, in Dublin or New York,
Will get you, prompt as at my eyebrow's wink,
Such terms as never you aspired to get
In all our own reviews and some not ours.
Go write your lively sketches ! be the first
“ Blougram, or The Eccentric Confidence ”—

Or better simply say, "The Outward-bound."
 Why, men as soon would throw it in my teeth
 As copy and quote the infamy chalked broad
 About me on the church-door opposite.
 You will not wait for that experience though,
 I fancy, howsoever you decide,
 To discontinue—not detesting, not
 Defaming, but at least—despising me !

Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour
 Sylvester Blougram, styled *in partibus*
Episcopus, nec non—(the deuce knows what
 It's changed to by our novel hierarchy)
 With Gigadibs the literary man,
 Who played with spoons, explored his plate's design,
 And ranged the olive-stones about its edge,
 While the great bishop rolled him out his mind.

For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke.
 The other portion, as he shaped it thus
 For argumentatory purposes,
 He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.
 Some arbitrary accidental thoughts
 That crossed his mind, amusing because new,
 He chose to represent as fixtures there,
 Invariable convictions (such they seemed
 Beside his interlocutor's loose cards

Flung daily down, and not the same way twice)
While certain hell-deep instincts, man's weak tongue
Is never bold to utter in their truth
Because styled hell-deep ('t is an old mistake
To place hell at the bottom of the earth)
He ignored these,—not having in readiness
Their nomenclature and philosophy :
He said true things, but called them by wrong names.
“ On the whole,” he thought, “ I justify myself
“ On every point where cavillers like this
“ Oppugn my life : he tries one kind of fence,
“ I close, he's worsted, that's enough for him.
“ He's on the ground : if ground should break away
“ I take my stand on, there's a firmer yet
“ Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.
“ His ground was over mine and broke the first :
“ So, let him sit with me this many a year ! ”

He did not sit five minutes. Just a week
Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.
Something had struck him in the “ Outward-bound ”
Another way than Blougram's purpose was :
And having bought, not cabin-furniture
But settler's-implements (enough for three)
And started for Australia—there, I hope,
By this time he has tested his first plough,
And studied his last chapter of St. John.

CLEON.

“As certain also of your own poets have said”—

CLEON the poet, (from the sprinkled isles,
Lily on lily, that o’erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps
“Greece”)—
To Protus in his Tyranny : much health !

They give thy letter to me, even now :
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
The master of thy galley still unlades
Gift after gift ; they block my court at last
And pile themselves along its portico
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee :
And one white she-slave from the group dispersed
Of black and white slaves, (like the chequer-work
Pavement, at once my nation’s work and gift,
Now covered with this settle-down of doves)
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands
Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence !
For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,

'Thy recognition of the use of life ;
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
'To help on life in straight ways, broad enough
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake—
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,
Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,
Thou first of men mightst look out to the East :
The vulgar saw thy tower, thou sawest the sun.
For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak
Thy great words, and describe thy royal face—
Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most.
Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.
It is as thou hast heard : in one short life
I, Cleon, have effected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.
That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
Is mine,—and also mine the little chant,
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark

When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their net.
The image of the sun-god on the phare,
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine ;
The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too.
I know the true proportions of a man
And woman also, not observed before ;
And I have written three books on the soul,
Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.
For music,—why, I have combined the moods,
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine ;
Thus much the people know and recognise,
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.
We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more composite,
Look not so great, beside their simple way,
To a judge who only sees one way at once,
One mind-point and no other at a time,—
Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way—not ours, nor meant for ours.
And ours is greater, had we skill to know :
For, what we call this life of men on earth,
This sequence of the soul's achievements here,
Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
Intended to be viewed eventually
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
But each part having reference to all,—

How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
Endure effacement by another part?
Was the thing done?—then, what 's to do again?
See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—
He did not overlay them, superimpose
The new upon the old and blot it out,
But laid them on a level in his work,
Making at last a picture ; there it lies.
So first the perfect separate forms were made,
The portions of mankind ; and after, so,
Occurred the combination of the same.
For where had been a progress, otherwise?
Mankind, made up of all the single men,—
In such a synthesis the labour ends.
Now mark me ! those divine men of old time
Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point
The outside verge that rounds our faculty ;
And where they reached, who can do more than reach ?
It takes but little water just to touch
At some one point the inside of a sphere,
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest
In due succession : but the finer air
Which not so palpably nor obviously,
Though no less universally, can touch
The whole circumference of that emptied sphere,
Fills it more fully than the water did ;
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself

Resolved into a subtler element.
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
Up to the visible height—and after, void ;
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus
To vindicate his purpose in our life :
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow ?
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,
That he or other god descended here
And, once for all, showed simultaneously
What, in its nature, never can be shown
Piecemeal or in succession ;—showed, I say,
The worth both absolute and relative
Of all his children from the birth of time,
His instruments for all appointed work.
I now go on to image,—might we hear
The judgment which should give the due to each.
Show where the labour lay and where the ease,
And prove Zeus' self, the latent everywhere !
This is a dream :—but no dream, let us hope,
'That years and days, the summers and the springs,
Follow each other with unwaning powers.
The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer far
Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock ;
The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe ;
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet ;
The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers ;
That young and tender crescent moon, thy slave,
Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,

Refines upon the women of my youth.
What, and the soul alone deteriorates?
I have not chanted verse like Homer, no—
Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved
And painted men like Phidias and his friend :
I am not great as they are, point by point.
But I have entered into sympathy
With these four, running these into one soul,
Who, separate, ignored each others' arts.
Say, is it nothing that I know them all ?
The wild flower was the larger ; I have dashed
Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's
Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,
And show a better flower if not so large :
I stand myself. Refer this to the gods
Whose gift alone it is ! which, shall I dare
(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
Discourse of lightly or depreciate ?
It might have fallen to another's hand : what then ?
I pass too surely : let at least truth stay !

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.
This being with me as I declare, O king,
My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,
So done by me, accepted so by men—
Thou askest, if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
I must not be accounted to attain
The very crown and proper end of life ?

Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
I face death with success in my right hand :
Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
The fortunate of men? " For " (writest thou)
" Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought.
" Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,
" The pictures men shall study ; while my life,
" Complete and whole now in its power and joy,
" Dies altogether with my brain and arm,
" Is lost indeed ; since, what survives myself?
" The brazen statue to o'erlook my grave,
" Set on the promontory which I named.
" And that—some supple courtier of my heir
" Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,
" To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.
" I go then : triumph thou, who dost not go !"

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.
Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,
That admiration grows as knowledge grows ?
That imperfection means perfection hid,
Reserved in part, to grace the after-time ?
If, in the morning of philosophy,
Ere aught had been recorded, nay perceived,
Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked
On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
Ere man, her last, appeared upon the stage—
Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced

The perfectness of others yet unseen.
Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee
“ Shall I go on a step, improve on this,
“ Do more for visible creatures than is done?”
Thou wouldst have answered, “ Ay, by making each
“ Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.
“ All ’s perfect else : the shell sucks fast the rock,
“ The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims
“ And slides, forth range the beasts, the birds take flight,
“ Till life’s mechanics can no further go—
“ And all this joy in natural life, is put,
“ Like fire from off thy finger into each,
“ So exquisitely perfect is the same.
“ But ’t is pure fire, and they mere matter are ;
“ It has them, not they it : and so I choose
“ For man, thy last premeditated work
“ (If I might add a glory to the scheme)
“ That a third thing should stand apart from both,
“ A quality arise within his soul,
“ Which, intro-active, made to supervise
“ And feel the force it has, may view itself,
“ And so be happy.” Man might live at first
The animal life : but is there nothing more ?
In due time, let him critically learn
How he lives ; and, the more he gets to know
Of his own life’s adaptabilities,
The more joy-giving will his life become.
Thus man, who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said :
“ Let progress end at once,—man make no step
“ Beyond the natural man, the better beast,
“ Using his senses, not the sense of sense.”
In man there 's failure, only since he left
The lower and unconscious forms of life.
We called it an advance, the rendering plain
Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's life,
And, by new lore so added to the old,
Take each step higher over the brute's head.
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,
Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to ;
A tower that crowns a country. But alas,
The soul now climbs it just to perish there !
For thence we have discovered ('t is no dream—
We know this, which we had not else perceived)
That there 's a world of capability
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,
Inviting us ; and still the soul craves all,
And still the flesh replies, “ Take no jot more
“ Than ere thou clombst the tower to look abroad !
“ Nay, so much less as that fatigue has brought
“ Deduction to it.” We struggle, fain to enlarge
Our bounded physical recipiency,
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
Repair the waste of age and sickness : no,
It skills not ! life 's inadequate to joy,

As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.
They praise a fountain in my garden here
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-bow
Thin from her tube ; she smiles to see it rise.
What if I told her, it is just a thread
From that great river which the hills shut up,
And mock her with my leave to take the same ?
The artificer has given her one small tube
Past power to widen or exchange—what boots
To know she might spout oceans if she could ?
She cannot lift beyond her first thin thread :
And so a man can use but a man's joy
While he sees God's. Is it, for Zeus to boast
“ See, man, how happy I live, and despair—
“ That I may be still happier—for thy use !”
If this were so, we could not thank our lord,
As hearts beat on to doing : 't is not so—
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness ?
Still, no. If care—where is the sign ? I ask,
And get no answer, and agree in sum,
O king, with thy profound discouragement,
Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.
Most progress is most failure : thou sayest well.

The last point now :—thou dost except a case —
Holding joy not impossible to one
With artist-gifts—to such a man as I
Who leave behind me living works indeed ;
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.

What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,
Confound the accurate view of what joy is
(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)
With feeling joy? confound the knowing how
And showing how to live (my faculty)
With actually living?—Otherwise
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
Because in my great epos I display
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act--
Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young?
Methinks I 'm older that I bowed myself
The many years of pain that taught me art!
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:
But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.
Yon rower, with the moulded muscles there,
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
I can write love-odes: thy fair slave 's an ode.
I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
For being beloved: she turns to that young man,
The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
I know the joy of kingship: well, thou art king!

“But,” sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,
To find thee tripping on a mere word) “what
“Thou writest, paintest, stays; that does not die:
“Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
“And Æschylus, because we read his plays!”

Why, if they live still, let them come and take
Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy cup,
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive?
Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
In this, that every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen ;
While every day my hairs fall more and more,
My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—
The horror quickening still from year to year,
The consummation coming past escape,
When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—
When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,
I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over-much,
Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
—To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us :
That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait
On purpose to make prized the life at large—
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death,
We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But no !
Zeus has not yet revealed it ; and alas,
He must have done so. were it possible !

Live long and happy, and in that thought die.
Glad for what was ! Farewell. And for the rest,
I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus ; we have heard his fame
Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—
I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
Hath access to a secret shut from us ?
'Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
In stooping to inquire of such an one,
As if his answer could impose at all !
He writeth, doth he ? well, and he may write.
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars ! certain slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached him and
Christ ;
And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrine could he held by no sane man.

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

I.

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives
First, when he visits, last, too, when he leaves
The world ; and, vainly favoured, it repays
The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze

By no change of its large calm front of snow.
And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know,
He cannot have perceived, that changes ever
At his approach ; and, in the lost endeavour
To live his life, has parted, one by one,
With all a flower's true graces, for the grace
Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.
Men nobly call by many a name the Mount
As over many a land of theirs its large
Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe
Is reared, and still with old names, fresh names vie,
Each to its proper praise and own account :
Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sportively.

II.

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
Across the waters to this twilight nook,
—The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook !

III.

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed ?
Go !—saying ever as thou dost proceed,
That I, French Rudel, choose for my device
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
Before its idol. See ! These inexpert
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt
The woven picture ; 't is a woman's skill
Indeed ; but nothing baffled me, so, ill
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed

On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees
On my flower's breast as on a platform broad :
But, as the flower's concern is not for these
But solely for the sun, so men applaud
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
But to the East—the East ! Go, say this, Pilgrim dear !

ONE WORD MORE *

TO E. B. B.

London, September, 1855.

I.

THERE they are, my fifty men and women
Naming me the fifty poems finished !
Take them, love, the book and me together :
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

II.

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
Made and wrote them in a certain volume
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
Else he only used to draw Madonnas :
These, the world might view—but one, the volume.
Who that one, you ask ? Your heart instructs you.

* Originally appended to the collection of Poems called “Men and Women,” the greater portion of which has now been, more correctly, distributed under the other titles of this edition.

Did she live and love it all her life-time ?
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving—
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's ?

III.

You and I would rather read that volume,
(Taken to his beating bosom by it)
Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
Would we not ? than wonder at Madonnas—
Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre—
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

IV.

You and I will never read that volume.
Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
Cried, and the world cried too, " Ours, the treasure !"
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

V.

Dante once prepared to paint an angel :
Whom to please ? You whisper " Beatrice."
While he mused and traced it and retraced it,

(Peradventure with a pen corroded
 Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
 When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
 Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
 Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
 Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,
 Let the wretch go festering through Florence)—
 Dante, who loved well because he hated,
 Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
 Dante standing, studying his angel,—
 In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
 Says he—"Certain people of importance"
 (Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)
 "Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet."
 Says the poet—"Then I stopped my painting."

VI.

You and I would rather see that angel,
 Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
 Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno.

VII.

You and I will never see that picture.
 While he mused on love and Beatrice,
 While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
 In they broke, those "people of importance :"
 We and Bice bear the loss for ever.

VIII.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?

This : no artist lives and loves, that longs not
Once, and only once, and for one only,
(Ah, the prize !) to find his love a language
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—
Using nature that 's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that 's turned his nature.
Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
None but would forego his proper dowry,—
Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,—
Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
Once, and only once, and for one only,
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

IX.

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement !
He who smites the rock and spreads the water,
Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
Even he, the minute makes immortal,
Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,
So he smote before, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked—"Shall smiting help us?"
When they drank and sneered—"A stroke is easy!"
When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,
Throwing him for thanks—"But drought was pleasant."
Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;

Thus the doing savours of disrelish ;
Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat ;
O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,
Carelessness or consciousness—the gesture.
For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude—
“ How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us ? ”
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—
“ Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better.”

X.

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant !
Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,
Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.
Never dares the man put off the prophet.

XI.

Did he love one face from out the thousands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,
Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)
He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
Keeping a reserve of scanty water
Meant to save his own life in the desert ;
Ready in the desert to deliver
(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

XII.

I shall never, in the years remaining,

Paint you pictures. no, nor carve you statues,
Make you music that should all-express me ;
So it seems : I stand on my attainment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me ;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
Other heights in other lives, God willing :
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, love !

XIII.

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last time.
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.
He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver,
Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once as I do.

XIV.

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
Enter each and all, and use their service,
Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving :
I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's,

Karshish, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.
 Let me speak this once in my true person,
 Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
 Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence--
 Pray you, look on these my men and women,
 Take and keep my fifty poems finished ;
 Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also !
 Poor the speech ; be how I speak, for all things.

XV.

Not but that you know me ! Lo, the moon's self !
 Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
 Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.
 Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
 Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
 Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
 Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
 Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
 Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
 Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
 Hard to greet, she traverses the houseroofs,
 Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
 Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

XVI.

What, there 's nothing in the moon note-worthy ?
 Nay : for if that moon could love a mortal,
 Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy)
 All her magic ('t is the old sweet mythos)
 She would turn a new side to her mortal,

Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—
Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even !
Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—
When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
Opens out anew for worse or better !
Proves she like some portent of an iceberg
Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals ?
Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire
Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain ?
Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,
When they ate and drank and saw God also !

XVII.

What were seen ? None knows, none ever shall know
Only this is sure—the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her !

XVIII.

This I say of me, but think of you, Love !

This to you—yourself my moon of poets !
Ah, but that 's the world's side, there 's the wonder,
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you !
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you—
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

XIX.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it,
Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom !

R. B.

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